

# ENOUGH

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Discovering a God Who Is Enough *When You're Not*

T A M Y R A   H O R S T



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## Part 1

# The Battle

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

*Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication.*

—Ephesians 6:10–18

The battle is closer than we realize.



## Once Upon a Time

**S**he burst into the room wearing a princess dress. “Look at me; I’m a princess!” she declared with joy as she twirled and danced.

I don’t remember how old my niece Kaleigh was at the time. I wish I had taken pictures. She soon disappeared and then reappeared in a different princess dress but with the same exuberance and joy. The innocent little girl was sure that everyone in the room loved her and would delight in and celebrate her.

“Look at me; I’m a princess!” she sang again as she began twirling. There’s just something about twirly skirts for little girls! They just make you want to dance and twirl and enjoy. (Who hasn’t twirled in a skirt, even if no one was watching?) The singsong declaration and dancing lasted a minute before Kaleigh was off down the hall to her room to change into another princess dress.

By the third or fourth grand entrance and twirling declaration of her royal status, her dad started to tell her to stop. I interrupted him. “Don’t tell her to stop. The world will tell her she’s not a princess soon enough. Let her enjoy it and believe it for now.”

### No longer princesses

As I write this, Kaleigh is thirteen, and her perspective is changing. Instead of twirling, she changes outfits several times because nothing looks right. No longer declaring she’s a princess, she’s too often focused on what isn’t right about herself and her appearance. This breaks my heart. She’s a beautiful, creative, and thoughtful girl. She’s strong and persistent and caring. She helps me with princess teas and other parts of my ministry whenever she can. She can be shy and introverted; she recently told me that she was tired of interacting with the friendly people at a church where I was speaking and was ready to leave. Like most girls her age, she’s a complex mix of emotions and thoughts—sometimes jumping from one to another without any warning for unsuspecting parents.

Last summer I had the incredible honor of baptizing her as she made her commitment to God public. Family and friends gathered on the banks of a lake our families have kayaked together. As the sun set and our friends headed home, she asked me to go out in the kayaks with her. This is a memory I will always treasure. I long for her to always see herself as beautiful inside and out, strong, creative, and caring—the way I see her.

## 12 • Enough

But the transition from little girl to teen is hard. And it impacts girls in so many ways:

- hormonally
- emotionally
- feeling pressured to fit in while also standing out
- taking advanced-placement classes
- taking college-credit courses while still in high school
- participating in sports
- feeling the need to be thin enough, pretty enough, and wear just the right clothes

Social media adds a new level to the pressure—even when you know that many “perfect” pictures have filters on them.

“Then you think you should look that way with filters too,” a seventeen-year-old girl recently shared with me as we talked about the battles and pressures that she and her friends face daily. Suddenly, who you are isn’t enough. There’s pressure to grow up and be perfect, look perfect, and do everything not only well but to excel. It’s no wonder that anxiety and depression are at an all-time high and growing, especially among teen girls.

Ypulse, a polling firm that focuses on Generation Z and millennials, surveyed more than thirteen hundred girls, ages eight to eighteen, on the topic of confidence. The results were dramatic.

- There was a 30 percent drop in confidence during puberty.
- The number of girls who said they were not allowed to fail rose from 18 percent to 45 percent from the ages of twelve to thirteen (that’s a 27-percent increase in just one year!).
- Girls under twelve shared that they “make friends really easily. [They] . . . can go up to anyone and start a conversation.” By the age of fourteen, they reported, “I feel like everybody is so smart and pretty and I’m just this ugly girl without friends.”<sup>1</sup>

Many girls do not believe they are good enough. One report states that “7 in 10 girls believe they are not good enough or do not measure up in some way, including their looks, performance in school and relationships with family and friends.”<sup>2</sup>

This lack of confidence causes girls to avoid taking risks or trying new things and keeps them from believing that God has a plan for their lives. They do not believe that who they are and what they are good at are acceptable. They often tend to try to please everyone around them (parents, teachers, friends, boys), and they expect perfection from themselves. And no matter how hard those who love them try to encourage them and tell them they’re still princesses, these girls no longer believe it.

Feeling like they're not good enough often causes girls to focus on negative feelings and thoughts. Their brains become hardwired to think negatively.

Each thought creates a path in the brain. The more we think that thought, the stronger the path. For instance, you look in the mirror and think, *I'm fat*. A path is created. The next time you look in a mirror, your brain remembers and thinks, *I'm fat*. You accept that thought, and the path deepens. Soon every time you look in the mirror, you see someone who is fat without even thinking about it—no matter what you really look like. (How many of us have looked back at pictures of ourselves when we were younger and thought we were fat only to realize we weren't?) The path becomes a deep rut in your thinking.

It becomes the truth of who we are in our minds: *I'm not good enough*.

### It's not just little girls

These deep ruts of negative thinking follow us into our adult lives. They become so ingrained in how we see ourselves that we refuse to believe anything anyone says to the contrary. No matter how many successes, accomplishments, or changes we make, we continue to see ourselves as not good enough.

We grow up into women who no longer twirl around rooms, singing about being princesses. Instead, we look into mirrors and see more things wrong with ourselves than right. We walk into rooms sometimes hoping no one will notice us.

### How did we get here?

I'm not sure I remember ever feeling like a princess. I don't remember dancing and twirling in front of people who laughed, celebrated me, and said, "Yes, you are a princess!" I do remember cartwheeling everywhere one summer. I can remember one day when I tried to see how many cartwheels I could do without stopping. (I think I got to more than 100.) I also remember hearing someone say afterward, "That girl can't just walk anywhere. She always has to be cartwheeling."

In my young mind, it sounded like cartwheeling wasn't good, and I internalized the message that I needed to be quieter, calmer, and not quite so animated. I just wasn't quiet enough. It wasn't the first not-enough message and definitely wouldn't be the last. Yet it made my little-girl heart believe I needed to tone down my exuberance for life and be quieter and calmer, to blend in and not stand out.

Children are young and impressionable. They learn about life and who they are from the people around them. They long to be loved and accepted. They don't have the life experience to understand people and why they say and do the things they do. They listen and watch people in their lives, interpreting their words and responses to them as the truth of who they are.

Katie still remembers the day she was singing, and her mom told her, "Stop that awful racket." Her little-girl heart heard, "You can't sing well enough." And for a long time, she didn't sing out loud with people around. "Looking back, I realize that we were in the car. Everyone was making noise. Mom was tired. Maybe she

was talking to all of us—not just me singing. But I didn’t understand that at the time. I just thought my singing must be pretty bad. So I stopped singing when people were listening.”

The messages come from a variety of places. Each of our stories is different. And we all believe that we’re not enough (or too much) in different ways or in distinct areas of our lives. Our stories have been impacted by people—parents, teachers, coaches, strangers, relatives, friends, and middle-school bullies. As we grow, the list of people who speak into our lives includes bosses, boyfriends, and husbands, even our children. But it’s not just people. How we interpret our failures, not-so-great grades, and mistakes shapes how we see ourselves. The media we take in shapes not only our worldview but also our personal view. Magazine covers with thin, beautiful women (next to the “best chocolate-cake recipe you have to try!”) cause us to see ourselves as not thin or pretty enough. Social media has drastically increased the messages we receive as we view others’ Instagram-filtered photos and glimpse their fun vacations and outings with friends, which we weren’t invited to! All too often our social-media scrolling leaves us feeling discontent, left out, and as though we are not enough.

Many of the messages were never meant to hurt us. Some impacted us because of our interpretation of them. As kids, we tend to make messages about ourselves, even when they have nothing to do with us. Mom and Dad divorce. Dad drinks too much and gets angry. Mom is emotionally distant and doesn’t have time to play or listen. An authority figure abuses us. A child may blame himself or herself: “If only I were a better kid, this wouldn’t happen.”

There are also people in our lives who did speak words to punish us and make us feel bad: bullies, angry parents, and abusive spouses. We took in their angry, mean words and allowed them to define us.

None of us walk through life unscathed by messages that wound our hearts and impact how we see ourselves. Is it possible to ever believe we are princesses again? To dance into a room and assume that everyone will be delighted to see us and love us?

### **Your story**

- Do you remember moments when you felt delighted in? Loved? Maybe like a princess?
- What are the messages that told your heart you weren’t enough? Do you remember when they began?
- What do you tell yourself when you look in a mirror? When you make a mistake or fail?

### **God is enough**

God is enough to heal the wounds caused by hurtful messages, and He will bring you confidence and peace with who you are in Him.



## Promise

“Long before he laid down earth’s foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made *whole and holy* by his love” (Ephesians 1:4, *The Message*; emphasis added).

## Prayer

Father God, Ruler of the universe, Creator of the heavens and earth and of us, speak hope and courage into our hearts. Bring healing to those places that were wounded by the messages we’ve heard about ourselves. Give us a willingness to hear and *believe* what *You* say about us. Remind us that You have called us daughters, and that makes us true princesses. Thank You for loving us with a love that longs to make us whole and holy. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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1. Ypulse and Confidence Code for Girls, “The Confidence Code for Girls: The Confidence Collapse and Why It Matters for the Next Gen,” Confidence Code for Girls, April 3, 2018, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/588b93f6bf629a6bec7a3bd2/t/5ac39193562fa73cd8a07a89/1522766258986/The+Confidence+Code+for+Girls+x+Ypulse.pdf>.

2. Dove Self-Esteem Fund, *Real Girls, Real Pressure: A National Report on the State of Self-Esteem* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Dove Self-Esteem Fund, 2008), quoted in “Statistics on Girls & Women’s Self Esteem, Pressures & Leadership,” Heart of Leadership, January 10, 2014, <https://heartofleadership.org/statistics/>.