

THE REAL FIGHT: a letter to a beloved friend

April 15, 2010

Dear gentle fighter,

I'm writing to remind you that the real fight is not out here. It's in your mind. It's the fight for perspective. It's the fight to know what's true about you and about other people. It's the fight to reject all the noise and lies that got put in your head a long time ago, telling you that you are small, powerless, insignificant. It's the fight to know that you are good, that you have always done the very best you could, that you deserve no reproach, that *you are worth a fight*. It's the fight to know that you were made in the image of God. Just by virtue of being a human being, you are the most complex and interesting thing in the known universe. You are simply as good as it gets.

You are always free to choose what you think about yourself. Nobody can take this freedom away from you. You always have the power to think what you want. This is the greatest power of all.

In my mind, I often envision two large, rabid dogs. Any time a thought floats through my mind that is in any way judgmental or unkind towards me, I unleash these crazed dogs and they shred it to its death. There is no reasoning with these dogs. If I command them to go, they storm off, rabid, crazed, foaming at the mouth; they pounce, they rip, they kill. They don't reason. That's what I do to the noise in my own head. I don't have debates with it. I kill.

This is your fight CP. Your fight is to know that you are good, that you are significant, that you have people, that you are big, that you are pure, that you deserve to be treated well, that despite the occasional mistakes that get made in your direction, people do love you and stick by you, that you already have everything you need. It's the fight to remember that I've always been pleased with you, and that I'll always care about you.

And here's the most wondrous thing about this fight: once you decide to take it on, you can't lose it. You can get knocked down temporarily, you can lose an occasional battle, the noise of a stinky past can sideswipe you every once in a while. But in the long haul: once you decide to wage this war, the war for perspective, you've already won. Winning comes from the very decision to have this fight. Your mind, your freedom and power to choose your perspective, is bigger than the lies that rattle in your head and put you down. All it takes is one single decision that you are worth fighting for. From there on, each time the noisy past confuses you and makes you forget this decision, you need to re-decide and re-decide, time and again.

Over time you will get better at making this decision. With practice, the decision to hold a perspective will last longer and become more effective. The fight for perspective is a muscle. The more you work it out, the stronger it becomes. It's a practice. Make it your practice and surround yourself with reminders. The quilt. "Little Friends". Sledding. Surround yourself with reminders everywhere in your life: in your backpack, on your website, in your facebook postings. Print out and hang this very letter by that chin-up bar that you have mounted on your bathroom door.

I hope you can temporarily borrow my perspective about you and use it as ammunition. I've borrowed your perspective about me to help me remember who I really am. I challenge you to like and honor yourself as much as you like and honor me. And for now, let me be the rabid dogs that would tear to shreds any punishing, belittling, or invalidating thought about you. If it helps, any time you have an unkind thought in your mind, you can picture me shredding it to death. Because I would. In a heartbeat. I would be entirely unreasonable about it. My perspective about you is that you are pure goodness, that you deserve to be treated with caring and tenderness, that you never deserved anything bad that ever happened to you, that your struggles as a human are trivial in comparison to how alive and magnificent you are. I think you're as good as it gets, and nobody can change my mind about you. Not even you. Borrow my perspective about you for a while if you need to. But ultimately, you don't need that either. You have complete power to decide what you think about yourself.

The decision to adopt a new perspective about yourself will change your life. It will also change the lives of those around you because it's contagious.

This is your fight.

If it helps, let me translate this letter into a language that you can understand:

Do this for me.

I want to see you win.