

Am I of Worth?

By Emily Thevenin

Growing up, I always enjoyed being involved in activities. I played sports, participated in clubs, worked hard in school, and attended seminary and church activities. My participation and success in these activities played a major role in how I viewed myself. As a missionary in Ireland, I continued to evaluate myself according to my efforts and relative success. I was blessed with the strength to work hard and complete my mission. Upon returning home, I went back to school and enveloped myself in activities.

Shortly thereafter I began to feel very ill. After seeing many doctors and undergoing expensive tests and painful surgeries, I learned I had a chronic physical illness. Despite my attempts to go on living a busy and active life, the illness caught up with me.

That was more than five years ago. I now experience constant pain and fatigue, and I have forgotten what it feels like to be healthy. Medications reduce my pain, but they also leave me unable to do much of anything; some days I am not even able to get out of bed. There are times when I feel I have lost a significant part of my identity. How can I be of worth if I can't even get out of bed?

As a youth I learned about individual worth. Now I'm really being tested as to the source of my worth. Is it based on my accomplishments, or is it based on the truth that I am a child of God? When faced with feelings of inadequacy, I seek guidance through conversing with my Heavenly Father as well as reading and pondering the scriptures.

I have often asked the Lord if I am still important. After much prayer and scripture study I have learned that Heavenly Father's closeness helps me understand more

fully who I really am. I have learned, and continue to learn each day, that my worth does not depend on my abilities but is founded in the fact that I am His child.

I continue to have days when I am discouraged, and I turn to the story of Job to give me comfort and direction. Despite unimaginable difficulties and being judged and misunderstood by friends, he continued to praise God (see Job 16; 19:14). While overwhelmed with grief, Job proclaimed, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15).

I find comfort in knowing that Job experienced difficulties despite his faithfulness. The story of Job teaches me that my illness is not a punishment from God, and that serving as a missionary and living right does not entitle me to a life free of pain and difficulty. The health problems I have do not make me less valuable to my Heavenly Father. In life we are often rewarded for our accomplishments, our work, our talents, and our abilities. I now find comfort in knowing that the Lord will bless me for my righteous desires despite my current physical weakness.

I lean on the Lord for support and guidance in my illness all the time. It is inspiring to feel the impressions of the Holy Ghost and know that Heavenly Father is teaching me. Through the gift of the Holy Ghost, He gives me peace, love, and assurance. I know by these specific impressions that I am of worth. Even if some days all I am able to do is lie in bed and pray that the pain lessens, it is comforting to know that He cares.

As a result of my trials, I am learning a powerful truth—I am a child of God. Now, instead of feeling empty and alone, I am filled with His love. ■

*I knew where
I was going
with my
education,
career, and
future family.
How could
I deal with
a chronic
illness?*

