



Growing up, I ticked of all the ‘weird kid’ qualities.

Bookworm? tick. Shy Catholic girl? Big tick. Facial scarring? Tick. Scar from open heart surgery? Tick.

You know how everyone gets known for something for in high school? Try being known as that weird kid who missed the first year of high school because you had open heart surgery.

I was born with a complex heart condition diagnosed at my birth. To keep me alive, off I went at four months for my first open heart surgery. I had my second at four years and a third at twelve to minimise the daily impact of my heart condition on my life.

For the most part my heart condition, doesn’t affect my day-to-day activities. I can walk, talk, see and hear. **It is my physical scars are the most obvious mark of my heart condition.** I have one long surgery scar running down my chest. Another on my back. But wait- there’s more! After my third surgery I was put on medication that resulted in me developing little spots all over my body. Not just one or two spots confined to one part of my body. Heaps of spots all over me. To my horror these many spots turned into permanent scars. **I began to see my heart condition and scarring as major personal weaknesses and I hated God for making me this way.**

Recently after hitting rock bottom I began the journey of talking to God. And amazingly He spoke back. Here’s what He had to say:

Look Back to Look Forward

The first thing God told me was to look back in order to move forward. Living life just

running away wallowing in your sad situation is easy. A life on the run is easy. We'd rather just bury our pain somewhere within us in a I-can't-deal-with-it-right-now attitude. The problem is right-now can become permanent. **We merely just go through the motions of life without taking our hurt to God and thus start drift further away from Him. When we run away we allow the devil to take hold of our flaws and use it for his glory.**

In my prayer journal there's an anonymous quote:

"You are God's greatest work of art created for a wonderful purpose."

God says He is the potter and we are the clay. I'd like to think God liked spots and He painted my face with lots of spotty scars to stamp His mark on me. We are told that we are made in God's image but there are many times I have flat out not believed that. Knowing that you're the only person in the room who looks like that makes you even more obsessed with how the world views you. The first thing we judge people on are based on looks and if you have a scar running down your chest and scars on your face your physical appearances can become something that makes you insecure.

Rather than taking this to God and beginning the healing journey with him, I pushed God away. In order to move forward you have to look back and talk to God about those weaknesses in your life. I'll let you in on a secret: He already knows what it is. He sees you. He sees your weaknesses. He knows how you feel unintelligent, He sees your your temper, your addictions. Taking the first step to owning your weaknesses is being honest to God and to yourself. Once you've looked back you can move forward with God and to God.

Faith Doesn't Eliminate Questions, Faith Knows Where To Take Them.

Surrendering your future to God is scary especially if you're a control-freak . We all wish we could have a sneak peak and time travel into our future to see what God has given us. Like most people, I have many questions about my future:

Who will want to employ me when I have to routinely take time off to have surgery? Will there be a guy who will see past my scarring and heart condition to marry me? How will I be able to care for my children when I'm having surgery When will I be cut open again?

These are my questions, you'll have your own questions in your head unique to who you are. It's the fear that seeps out of the questions that the devil manipulates to drag you into dark places. For a very long time, I would not apply for jobs because I didn't think I could have the career I wanted and have a heart condition at the same time. As for men, I shut myself off to them, even friendship was off-limits. I didn't think my scarring and heart condition were weaknesses that would allow me to have friendships with men or find real love with a guy. I thought my weaknesses would prevent me from having a future.

Rather than asking God why He had given me a heart condition and lots of scars and how I could use it to bring His love to people, I grew to be incredibly resentful and angry towards God. Having faith doesn't remove those daunting questions about our future. But faith knows where to take those questions. I love writing so I have a prayer journal where I write down all my questions and share openly with God. We each have our special connection with Go, use yours to express your questions and,your doubts to God.

When those haunting questions about your future are dragging you down let go of the temptation to see only what's here and now. God promised you a future so live in hope for your future and all that is ahead of you. Don't give up on that dream job just because you are plagued by that question 'Am I smart enough?'. Don't give up on finding real love just because you're haunted by the question 'will a person find me attractive enough to be with me?'. **We have a faith and a God to take our questions to and unlike a counsellor He doesn't charge but is always there! But beware God may not always answer your questions in the way you want Him to.**

Becoming A Miracle

One question that I begged God to answer was why He wouldn't give me my miracle, a change of heart. Being Catholic demands that we believe in the impossible. **We pray to God asking Him to change His heart and work miracles we want: "God work a miracle and give me a job! God work a miracle and make me overcome this sin!"**

I remember as a child and teenager I would pray for God to change His heart and perform a miracle that changed my heart: Child Winona: “God if you take away my heart condition, my surgery scar and my facial scars, I’ll be the most holy child you ever created. I’ll become a nun or a lay person and I’ll travel the world and show your miracle to everyone. I will boast about your power in taking my scars and heart condition away.”

Nothing changed.

Teenage Winona: “God, you can keep my heart condition, but at least take away my facial scarring and I promise I will tell everyone how you made me beautiful. I will be a living miracle for you.”

Nothing Changed.

22-year-old angry/resentful/upset Winona: “Well you gave me these hideous scars and this stupid heart condition what do you want me to do with it?”

The next morning, I was writing in my prayer journal and God directed me to this scripture verse:

“I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me,” (2 Corinthians 19:9.)

What if I began boasting of my weakness? Instead of being bitter, angry, resentful about my scars and heart condition I used it to help bring God’s love to others. In our humanness we fail to realise God’s change of heart isn’t the miracle we maybe begging for. He may not give us that job/relationship/beautiful body we yearn for. But just because you don’t get your miracle doesn’t mean you can’t become one. I stopped asking God to create a miracle and learnt to become one.

Sure- my scarring and heart condition means I am not popular with the boys, and I need surgery often. But it also means I have an unshakable bond with other people who have physical scars and a disability. God eventually directed me to volunteering with children suffering from cancer. I have a loving bond with these kids because of my scars. The kids touch my facial scars and my surgery scar. They look at me from their tiny, beautiful eyes and they see a reflection of themselves: scars galore! What were my weaknesses, a lifelong disability and bad scarring, can help kids like myself.

A change of heart and becoming a miracle isn't easy. It's a tough, long and hard journey of total surrender to God and learning to love the weaknesses in you. You, the flawed you, can become the miracle and be a miracle to others without obtaining that perfect outcome you believe is the miracle. If you're reading this, start your journey towards being God's miracle. Look back with God and move forward. Take your questions to Him. With a change of heart, you can become God's miracle.