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Does Life Offer us Second Chances?

Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *Earlham School of Religion*

Blog Series: Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda

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It was the second week of January, and I was alone with the three kids as my husband was off to sunny California on business. The first night he was away, my youngest son had a little fight with his older sister. He was so upset that he came to me and asked if he could sleep in my room. I automatically said “no,” as I have never allowed my kids to sleep in my room and wasn’t going to start now. But he put on the saddest, longest face that I eventually caved in and allowed him to sleep in my room.

I didn’t sleep a wink that night.

And I remembered why I never allow my kids to sleep in my room. I am a very light sleeper and any movement or sound will wake me up. My son started off the night by kicking me hard, then like a sleep walker, he got up and started mumbling to someone. He started scratching his arms which turned into tossing and turning. I was woken by him every 30 minutes. By 4:30 a.m. I was a mess and told him to get up and go sleep in his room. He promptly left and I slept peacefully for about two hours until my alarm clock went off at 6:10 a.m.

When my youngest son got up, I looked at him sternly and declared right away, “You will never sleep with Mommy again!”

He had a surprised look on his face and sheepishly said, “But, what about second chances?”

I said that I don't give second chances, especially when it keeps me up at night. He complained, "You have to give second chances."

That moment he reminded me about 'second chances' was an epiphany. Isn't life about getting second chances? Many people go through life on a terrible path and they are given a second chance at life.

Where would I be without second chances? Where would most of us be without second chances in life? Most of us are only where we are because we got second chances. People who experience serious accidents and survive are given second chances in life. When we think about our faith journey, isn't that a second chance at life? Isn't that the essence of God's grace?

I have now been teaching full-time for eight years and I got my second chance. As I reflect on my early teaching years, there are a lot of 'could haves, would haves, and should haves.' One of the many would haves is to take better care of myself. Yes, that is right, ME!

I had two babies while I was doing my Ph.D. and then had my third child after I finished my doctoral program. I started teaching in 2004 and it felt like I was bulldozing through life. I wasn't sleeping well, eating well, taking breaks or taking care of myself at all. I wasn't exercising frequently and I started to gain weight and have terrible body ailments. Having three little kids at home was more than I can handle. And then juggling three kids with my teaching position was overwhelming. I was literally running around feeding my kids and driving them around town as well as trying to teach, attend faculty meeting, guide students and write coherent papers. I was overwhelmed with seminary teaching responsibilities as well as family obligations. It felt like I was driving a car out of control that was heading for a wreck. I was giving myself to family, teaching and everyone else...except for me.

The constant giving came crashing down in the winter of 2008 when my entire body started to deteriorate. In just two months, I had gotten the flu, an eczema break out, eye infections, skin rashes, joint aches and then was diagnosed with high blood pressure. Something needed to change or I was just going to keep going downhill. As women and as mothers, our bodies take a beating. We give birth and do not take the time to allow our bodies to heal. Our bodies are the last thing that we take care of on our long to-do lists. Thus many of us just collapse at the end of the day.

This is a big "should have".... I should have taken better care of myself before my body started to break down.

Now, I work out daily. And have been for the past three years. I eat a lot of fresh fruit and take my vitamins ritually. I try to make time for myself be more conscious about self-care.

Life is about second chances. And yes, I did end up giving my son a second chance the next day and all worked out well. I think as young scholars and professors, we all need to extend ourselves this grace - these second chances, and even third, and fourth chances - as a way to

practice offering that privilege to others, like our loved ones. In the midst of all the craziness, teaching, marking, preparing, writing, deadlines and expectations, we all need to take better care of our entire being, body, mind and soul...because we all need second chances, and thankfully they are there for us.

<https://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/2013/03/does-life-offer-us-second-chances/>