

*Front of the Class*

About a year ago I told you of the Hallmark Hall of Fame movie titled *Front of the Class*. True to the Hallmark style, this was one of those “feel good” movies that can cause even a manly man to shed a tear or two. It was based on the true story of a teacher named Brad Cohen. When Cohen was six years old he began having twitches and making noises similar to barking. At first, everyone thought he was trying to be the class clown but as the symptoms persisted, people became annoyed. Kids made fun of him, the school staff disciplined him and his father kept telling to cut it out. This went on for six years until Cohen was finally diagnosed with Tourette’s syndrome at age twelve. Tourette’s syndrome is a neuropsychiatric disorder that causes physical and vocal tics. It is most often associated with the use of obscenities but that condition is actually Coprolalia and not Tourette’s. Putting a label on the condition was helpful in many ways, but Cohen and his family also learned there was no cure nor drugs to suppress the tics.

One evening Cohen and his mother attended a support group. There were people of all ages with Tourette’s. One of the mothers suggested that Cohen be home schooled so he could avoid the bullying and other negative situations that comes with having this condition. As they were leaving, Cohen’s mother apologized for taking him to the group but Cohen said he was happy they went. At the group he saw many people who allowed their condition to win. From that night on, Cohen decided that he was going to be victorious over his “constant companion,” as he called it. He used his Tourette’s as the greatest teacher he ever had. From his condition he learned perseverance and the resolve to never give up. Since he was six years old Cohen has had to endure the prejudice from children and adults. He wanted to teach and although he graduated *cum laude* and had excellent references, he had to interview with twenty-five schools before he was given that a chance. He was finally hired by Mountain View Elementary in Cobb County, Georgia to teach second and third grade. He did such an excellent job that he was given Georgia’s First Teacher of the Year award. He went on to win other awards and accolades and was very popular among students, teachers and parents. Today, he is assistant vice principle at Addison Elementary in Cobb County.

The story of Cohen reminds me of two characters in the Bible. The first is Job’s wife when her best suggestion after Job had suffered in so many ways was to, “Curse God and die.” (Job 2:9) How easy it is to give up when things get hard. One saying I like a lot is “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” This brings me to the second character, who is Paul. Paul suffered from some kind of affliction but we don’t know what that was. What we do know is that he prayed to have his “thorn in the side” removed. The only answer he got back was, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-11) It was the weakness that actually made Paul strong because he had to rely on the strength of Christ. It is so easy to give up but imagine all the great things we would live without had so many great men and women given up. We can be like Job’s wife and throw in the towel because things get too hard or we can have victory in Christ over any and all tough times we face.