

Angi Lovejoy: 11/19/19
Before and After

I love a good makeover show. A tired, overworked mommy is pulled from a crowd to be pampered for an hour or so. Then she walks out, looking all glamorous and youthful with new clothes, hairstyle (and probably shapewear). Her husband and/or kids are flabbergasted with how beautiful she is. The husband says something like, "I didn't think it was possible, but she's even more gorgeous!"

They show us a split-screen of the tired mom before and after. We applaud! She looks so much better! She must be so much happier!

Or, maybe it's that weight-loss show. The one with contestants who win money for losing weight. In the final show, they come out, slimmer and healthier. They frown and scowl at their "before" images. They might say something like, "I'll never look like THAT again! What was I thinking?"

I have an eating disorder that has brought me lifelong shame and frustration. But God has given me hope and healing through Celebrate Recovery. When I realize the changes God's made on this journey, it's easy for me to think of the old me as disgusting, unloveable, loathsome. This seems like a positive idea - to want nothing to do with the life I used to lead. But, what happens if I have a bad day? If I slip back a little? If I am tempted by something I thought was out of my life forever? If all I have for that part of me is loathing and disgust, then Satan has me just where he wants me: ready to give up. Why try to be Godly, when I know I will always fail?

But I am trying something new: being kind to my past self. God is teaching me that he loves the before-Angi just as much as he loves the after-Angi. He absolutely calls me to be transformed by the renewing of my mind (Romans 12:2), to be Godly and put my old ways behind me. But, if I look back at the old me with kindness and forgiveness, I can stop the pendulum-swing of hating myself for what I did/going back to unhealthy patterns /hating myself for what I do.

In the real world, there is no clear before and after. After the show, even those makeover ladies have to go home and wash their own hair. If I'm really living for Jesus, one moment at a time, there's *before*, and there's *right now*. And right now, I want to grow and change and be more like Christ. The only after is the hereafter. (And I already know hereafter-Angi is going to be just fine.)