



I Am Nothing, by Paul Buchheit

What will you do if you're too tough to be a good woman, too sensitive to be a good man, too selfish to be a good husband, too lazy to be a good employee, too shy to be a good friend, too caring to be rational, too fat to be pretty, too effeminate to be straight, too introverted to be a good leader, too smart to be kind, too young to be taken seriously, too old to make a difference, or too far behind to even get in the race?

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These are all false standards and false dichotomies, but they are so common and so ingrained that we sometimes believe in them without even

realizing it. And this leads to a mountain of insecurities, because nobody measures up to these crazy standards (and nobody should). But even if we don't believe in these things, it still matters what other people think, right? What will the neighbors think? Or how about our co-workers, or the people at church? And so everyone works to hide their insecurities, and they look around at their peers for comparison, and maybe they feel bad because everyone else seems to have it easy, to have it all figured out. The truth is, nobody can see the truth anymore. They are all working to hide the truth, because the truth is that they are afraid of who or what they really are. So they all put on a show, and they pretend to be a good whatever. Or maybe they rebel, and make a point of being a bad whatever, but then they are still under the control of that false standard, and they are still not being themselves.

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That is all so exhausting.

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I am nothing. It's simple. If I were smart, I might be afraid of looking stupid. If I were successful, I might be afraid of failure. If I were a man, I might be afraid of being weak. If I were a Christian, I might be afraid of losing faith. If I were an atheist, I might be afraid of believing. If I were rational, I might be afraid of my emotions. If I were introverted, I might be afraid of meeting new people. If I were respectable, I might be afraid of looking foolish. If I were an expert, I might be afraid of being wrong.

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But I am nothing, and so I am finally free to be myself.

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This isn't license to stagnate. Change is inevitable. Change is part of who we are, but if we aren't changing for the better, then we are just slowly decaying.

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By returning to zero expectations, by accepting that I am nothing, it is easier to see the truth. Fear, jealousy, insecurity, unfairness,

embarrassment -- these feelings cloud our ability to see what is. The truth is often threatening, and once our defenses are up, it's difficult to be completely honest with anyone, even ourselves. But when I am nothing, when I have no image or identity or ego to protect, I can begin to see and accept things as they really are. That is the beginning of positive change, because we cannot change what we do not

accept and do not understand. But with understanding, we can finally see the difference between fixing problems, and hiding them, the difference between genuine improvement, and faking it. We discover that many of our weaknesses are actually strengths once we learn how to use them, and that our greatest gifts are often buried beneath our greatest insecurities.Â

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--Paul Buchheit, in _I Am Nothing_
[<http://paulbuchheit.blogspot.com/2011/08/i-am-nothing.html>]

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