

DAY 1

Hello... My Name Is _____

Scripture: Isaiah 43:1 (KJV)

"Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine."

Hello... my name is _____.

Have you ever been to one of those events where you have to wear one of those little name tags? You know the ones. Introduce yourself. Tell everybody where you're from, what you do, and maybe even share a fun fact about yourself.

I'll just be honest with you... if I've got to wear the name tag, I probably ain't going! HA!

I don't know if it's because nobody ever knows how to pronounce my name, and then it gets awkward when I have to correct them. Then they're apologizing, I'm apologizing for correcting them, and suddenly we're both standing there uncomfortable.

Just me?! Okay then!!!

Or EVEN WORSE... the ones where you have to stand up in front of everybody and tell three things about yourself.

I was ALWAYS the worst at those.

Like, ummm... hey! I love all things pink, Jesus is my Savior, and McDonald's French fries are my favorite?!

I mean, WHAT are we really gaining from this little exercise?! HA!

But you know what I've been thinking about?

Aren't you thankful that you never have to introduce yourself to Jesus?

You never have to walk into His presence and say, "Hello, my name is..."

Because He ALREADY KNOWS.

Before you ever took your first breath, He knew your name. Before your mother ever held you in her arms, He knew who you would become. He knew the number of hairs on your head, the color of your eyes, the sound of your laugh, and every little detail that makes you, YOU.

Jeremiah 1:5 reminds us that before God formed Jeremiah in the womb, He knew him.

Now THAT is something to shout about!

Let's be honest. There are times when we walk into a room and hope nobody knows our name. Maybe we're carrying some shame, insecurity, disappointment, or even a past that we'd rather nobody bring up.

And then there are other times when we walk into a room thinking EVERYBODY ought to know our name!

Maybe because of what we've accomplished, the title we carry, the position we hold, or the things we've worked so hard to achieve.

But can I remind you of something today?

Neither your shame nor your success determines your identity in Christ.

You see, the world has a funny way of identifying us. Some people know us by our mistakes. Others know us by our accomplishments. Some know us by the family we come from, the job we work, or the title we carry.

But JESUS?

He knows us by NAME.

Not by our failures.

Not by our reputation.

Not by our bank account.

Not by the opinions of the people sitting across the room.

BY NAME.

And I think sometimes we get so caught up in trying to make a name for ourselves that we forget the beauty of already being known by Him. We want recognition. We want approval. We want to be seen, appreciated, and acknowledged.

And while there's nothing wrong with wanting to feel valued, **we must be careful not to allow the recognition of people to become the foundation of our identity.**

Because here's the thing...

People can forget your name.

People can mispronounce your name.

People can overlook your name.

And sometimes, people may even try to tarnish your name.

But none of those things change the fact that your name is known by the One who created you.

I love the account in John 20 when Mary Magdalene was standing outside the empty tomb, weeping. Jesus was standing right there, but she didn't recognize Him.

Until He spoke ONE WORD.

"Mary."

HER NAME.

And suddenly, she knew exactly who was speaking to her.

Oh, how powerful is that?!

He didn't have to give her some long explanation. He didn't have to remind her of everything He had done. He simply called her by name.

And she recognized His voice.

Friend, the same Savior who called Mary by name is the One who knows yours today.

He knows the name attached to the prayers you've been praying.

He knows the name of the person who's been crying behind closed doors.

He knows the name of the one who feels forgotten, overlooked, or unworthy.

And He knows the name of the one who's been so busy trying to become somebody that they've forgotten WHO they belong to.

Maybe today, instead of asking ourselves, "Do they know who I am?" we should be asking,

"Am I living like I know WHOSE I am?"

Because when you understand that you belong to Jesus, you don't have to walk into every room looking for validation.

You don't have to prove your worth.

You don't have to compete for recognition.

You can simply walk in knowing that the God of all creation already knows your name.

And friend, if there's ever been an introduction that matters, it's not the one you make to the world.

It's the relationship you have with the One who already knows you.

So the next time you find yourself feeling unnoticed, unimportant, or unsure of who you are, remember the words of Isaiah 43:1:

"I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine."

You are known.

You are seen.

You are loved.

And through Jesus Christ, you can belong to the One who knew your name before the world ever heard it.

You may not be known by everybody in the room, but you are known by the One who holds the whole world in His hands.

And THAT, my friend, is more than enough.

Today's Reflection Have I been allowing the opinions, recognition, or expectations of others to define who I am? What would change in my life if I truly walked every day with the confidence that God knows my name?

DAY 2

Firm Foundation

When Everything Else Is Shaking

Scripture: Matthew 7:24-25 (KJV)

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.”

Have you ever noticed how quickly life can change?

One phone call. One unexpected circumstance. One disappointment. One season you never saw coming. Suddenly, everything that once felt secure begins to shake.

And if we're not careful, we'll allow the circumstances surrounding us to determine the stability within us.

But can I remind you of something today?

A firm foundation doesn't mean the storms won't come. It means the storms don't have the final say!

In Matthew 7, Jesus tells the story of two builders. Both built houses. Both experienced storms. Both faced the same rain, wind, and floods. But only one house remained standing.

What made the difference?

The foundation.

The wise builder didn't build upon something that merely looked secure. He built upon something that could withstand the storm.

And I wonder how often we do the opposite in our own lives.

We build our identity upon people's opinions. Our confidence upon accomplishments. Our security upon relationships. Our peace upon circumstances. And then we wonder why we feel like everything is falling apart when those things begin to change.

Here's the truth: **Anything you build your identity upon that can be taken away from you was never meant to be your foundation.**

Your circumstances will change. People may disappoint you. Seasons will come and go. Even your own feelings will fluctuate.

But JESUS CHRIST remains the same!

Hebrews 13:8 reminds us, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

And here's what I love about the wise builder: Jesus didn't say the house stood because the storm wasn't strong enough. He said it stood because it was founded upon a rock!

Oh, somebody needs to hear this today!

Your stability isn't determined by the strength of the storm. It's determined by the strength of your foundation!

But there's something else we cannot overlook. Jesus said the wise man was the one who not only HEARD His words but DID them.

A firm foundation isn't built simply by knowing about Jesus. It's established through a life surrendered to Him, grounded in His Word, and obedient to His voice.

So when the storms come, and they will, you don't have to question who you are or whose you are.

You are His.

You are chosen.

You are loved.

You are established in Christ.

And when your identity is rooted in the ROCK, the things happening around you don't have to destroy what's being built within you.

Because when CHRIST is your foundation, you can be shaken by life's circumstances without being destroyed by them.

Reflect & Respond What have you been building your identity, confidence, or security upon? Is there an area of your life where you've allowed circumstances or the opinions of others to become more influential than God's Word?

Take time today to examine your foundation. Ask the Lord to help you build every part of your life upon His truth.

Today's Reminder: My circumstances may change, my seasons may shift, and the storms may come, but my identity is secure because my foundation is JESUS CHRIST!

DAY 3

Labels — Part 1

You Are Who HE Says You Are

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV)

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Have you ever been LABELED?

You know, when somebody decides they know who you are based on something you've done, something you've been through, or worse... something somebody ELSE told them about you?

A label is a word or phrase used to classify or identify someone or something. And sometimes, those labels can be inaccurate, unfair, or downright restrictive.

Maybe you've been labeled by a past failure.

A mistake.

A broken relationship.

A season of your life you'd rather forget.

Or maybe somebody heard a story about you, decided it was the truth, and took it upon themselves to tell everybody else who YOU were.

And just like that, you're walking around carrying a label you never asked for.

Can we just be REAL for a minute?!

Some of the heaviest things we carry aren't the things we've done. They're the things people have SAID about us.

I'll never forget one particular night.

We had just posted the event page for an upcoming women's conference on social media. The excitement was building, the expectancy was growing, and I could hardly wait to share everything the Lord was preparing to do!

But what made that season even more special was what had happened in my own personal life just a week earlier.

I had finally experienced a breakthrough that I had desperately needed for MONTHS.

I had prayed.

I had cried.

I had sought the Lord.

And FINALLY, I was beginning to see evidence of healing in places that had been deeply wounded.

I could look at people who had hurt me without feeling that same overwhelming anger.

I could walk into a room with my head held high, knowing who I was in Christ.

I was beginning to understand that their opinions, their accusations, and their LABELS did not have the authority to define me anymore.

Because, friend, I had allowed those things to live RENT FREE in my mind for FAR too long.

And then came that night.

It was almost 1 o'clock in the morning. Now, normally, I'm LONGGG asleep by then! HA!

But for whatever reason, I was awake and scrolling through social media when a notification popped up.

Someone had commented on our women's conference event.

Of course, I clicked on it.

And friend...

It was as if somebody had punched me directly in the stomach.

Every bit of air inside of me felt like it disappeared.

There it was.

A public comment labeling me as something I was not, questioning my character, and asking how anyone could possibly want to attend a conference under this kind of leadership.

WHEW.

Talk about a moment where you have to choose between reacting in your flesh and responding in the Spirit!

Because I had some THOUGHTS.

And I'm sure you can imagine a few of them! HA!

But all I could manage to say was, "JESUS, I NEED BIG HELP RIGHT NOW. Because I have absolutely NO idea how to handle this."

And isn't it something?

Just one week earlier, I had been celebrating the freedom I was finally beginning to experience.

And now here I was, staring at words that threatened to pull me right back into the very place God had been bringing me out of.

Have you ever been there?

Where you feel like you've finally taken two steps forward, and then BAM!

Something happens that makes you feel like you've been knocked three steps backward?

An accusation.

A conversation.

A social media post.

A reminder of something you thought you'd already overcome.

And suddenly, all those old feelings come rushing back.

But here's what I've learned.

Just because something tries to reopen an old wound doesn't mean you have to surrender the healing God has already begun.

The enemy would love nothing more than to convince you that the labels of your past are still attached to your future.

He wants you so consumed with what people are saying ABOUT you that you forget what God has already spoken OVER you.

And friend, I am a living testimony that you can have every unnecessary, unfair, and untrue label slapped on you, your marriage, and your family...

AND STILL BE STANDING.

Not because you're strong enough on your own.

But because the One holding you up is GREATER than the voices trying to tear you down.

Second Corinthians 5:17 reminds us that when we are in Christ, we become NEW CREATURES.

Old things have passed away.

ALL things have become new.

Notice something about that Scripture.

It doesn't say you're a new creation as long as everybody agrees with it.

It doesn't say you're redeemed only if nobody remembers your past.

And it certainly doesn't say your identity changes every time somebody has a negative opinion about you.

NO!

Your identity in Christ is established by what HE has done, not by what THEY have said.

And that brings me to one of my favorite moments in Scripture.

In Mark 5, we read about a woman who had suffered from an issue of blood for twelve long years.

TWELVE YEARS.

She had suffered physically, spent everything she had seeking help, and instead of getting better, her condition had grown worse.

Can you imagine?

Twelve years of pain.

Twelve years of disappointment.

Twelve years of living with a condition that affected so much of her life.

And because of the ceremonial purity laws of that time, her condition would have carried social and religious consequences, too.

But one day, she heard about JESUS.

And she made up her mind that if she could just touch His clothes, she would be healed.

So she pressed through the crowd.

She reached out.

And she TOUCHED the hem of His garment.

And IMMEDIATELY, she was healed!

But here's the part that gets me.

When Jesus stopped and asked who had touched Him, she came forward trembling and told Him the truth.

And do you know what Jesus called her?

Not unclean.

Not rejected.

Not hopeless.

Not even by the condition she'd suffered with for twelve years.

DAUGHTER.

Mark 5:34 says:

"And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

OH, FRIEND!!!

The woman Scripture had introduced to us by her CONDITION was addressed by Jesus with a word of BELONGING.

DAUGHTER.

And I wonder how many of us are still introducing ourselves by things Jesus never intended to be our identity.

Hello, I'm the one who failed.

Hello, I'm the one who got divorced.

Hello, I'm the one who made that mistake.

Hello, I'm the one everybody talks about.

Hello, I'm the one who was rejected.

But what if today you stopped introducing yourself by your PAIN and started identifying yourself by your POSITION IN CHRIST?

Redeemed.

Forgiven.

Chosen.

Loved.

A child of the Most High God!

Because there comes a time when YOU have to decide which voice you're going to listen to.

The voice of the enemy that constantly reminds you of what you've done, where you've been, and what people have said?

Or the voice of your Heavenly Father that calls you to repentance, offers forgiveness, and reminds you who you are IN HIM?

The labels of this world may describe what you've been through, but they do not have the authority to determine who you are in Christ.

So friend, stop allowing the opinions of people to outweigh the promises of God.

You don't have to convince everybody of who you are.

You just have to know WHOSE you are.

And tomorrow, we're going to take this one step further, because there's a difference between the voice that corrects you in love and the voice that condemns you in shame.

And learning to recognize that difference just might be the beginning of the freedom you've been praying for.

Today's Reflection What labels have I allowed others to place on me? Have I allowed their opinions to influence how I see myself? What does God's Word say about my identity in Christ?

DAY 4

Labels — Part 2

Learning the Difference Between Godly Conviction & Destructive Condemnation

Scripture: Romans 8:1 (KJV)

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Have you ever stopped to think about how many voices are speaking into your life on a daily basis?

The voices of family.

Friends.

Coworkers.

Social media.

And then there's that little voice inside your own head that sometimes seems to be the LOUDEST one of them all!

You know the one.

The one that reminds you of the mistake you made five years ago.

The conversation you wish you could redo.

The words you should have said.

Or maybe the words you wish you had NEVER said!

And before you know it, you're sitting there replaying something that happened YEARS ago, feeling the same shame, guilt, and embarrassment all over again.

Just me?!

Okay then! HA!

But here's something I've been learning in my own walk with the Lord.

Not every voice that makes you feel guilty is the voice of God.

And not every uncomfortable feeling means the enemy is attacking you, either.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit is lovingly correcting us.

Other times, we're allowing condemnation to convince us that we'll never be anything more than our mistakes.

And friend, there is a BIG difference between the two.

Let's talk about it.

Godly conviction reveals what needs to change. Destructive condemnation tells you that YOU will never change.

Conviction says, "That behavior doesn't align with God's Word. Let's make it right."

Condemnation says, "Look what you did. You'll never be good enough."

Conviction draws you toward repentance.

Condemnation pushes you toward hopelessness.

Conviction reminds you that God's grace is sufficient to help you overcome sin.

Condemnation convinces you that your sin is too great for God's grace.

And I don't know about you, but I'm THANKFUL for a Savior who doesn't leave us where He finds us!

Because here's the thing.

God loves us just as we are, but He loves us too much to leave us unchanged.

Hebrews 12:6 reminds us:

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth..."

His correction is not evidence that He has abandoned you.

It's evidence of His love and His desire for you to grow.

Think about a parent correcting a child.

A loving parent doesn't discipline their child because they want that child to feel worthless.

They correct them because they want to protect them, teach them, and help them grow into who they're meant to become.

And our Heavenly Father is far more loving and wise than we could ever be.

But here's where we have to be careful.

We cannot confuse the conviction of the Holy Spirit with the condemnation of the enemy.

Because one leads to LIFE.

And the other wants to keep you trapped in SHAME.

I think about Peter.

Ohhhh, Peter!

The same Peter who boldly declared that he would never deny Jesus.

The same Peter who was willing to step out of the boat.

The same Peter who loved the Lord, yet found himself denying Him THREE TIMES.

Can you imagine the shame?

The guilt?

The regret?

Scripture tells us that after Peter denied Jesus, he went out and wept bitterly.

And I wonder how many of us have found ourselves in a similar place.

Not necessarily denying Jesus with our words, but making a decision that left us thinking, "Lord, how could I have done that?"

But I LOVE what happens later.

In John 21, after His resurrection, Jesus meets Peter again.

And instead of allowing Peter's failure to become the final chapter of his story, Jesus gives him an opportunity to reaffirm his love.

Three times, Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him.

And He commissions Peter to care for His sheep.

WHEW!

Peter's failure was real, but it wasn't FINAL.

And neither does yours have to be.

You see, the Lord didn't pretend Peter had never denied Him.

But He also didn't allow that denial to be the end of Peter's calling.

There was restoration.

There was purpose.

There was still work to be done for the Kingdom!

And friend, that's what godly conviction does.

It doesn't ignore the sin.

It leads us to repentance, forgiveness, and restoration through Jesus Christ.

Second Corinthians 7:10 says:

"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

Did you catch that?

GODLY sorrow produces repentance.

Not a lifetime sentence of shame.

Not an identity rooted in guilt.

REPENTANCE.

A turning away from sin and a turning toward God.

And that brings me back to those labels we talked about yesterday.

Sometimes the labels we're carrying aren't even the ones somebody else placed on us.

Sometimes they're the ones we've placed on OURSELVES.

Unworthy.

Failure.

Not good enough.

Too far gone.

Too broken.

But friend, if you have repented and surrendered your life to Jesus, why are you still allowing shame to identify you by something He's forgiven?

Now, hear my heart.

This doesn't mean our actions don't have consequences.

It doesn't mean we don't need accountability.

And it certainly doesn't mean we can continue living however we please and call it grace.

True repentance produces a change in direction.

But **there is a difference between taking responsibility for what you've done and allowing what you've done to become your identity.**

The enemy would love for you to believe that because you've failed, you are a failure.

Because you've sinned, you can never be used by God.

Because somebody knows your past, your future has already been decided.

NO, NO, NO!

That's not the Gospel!

The Gospel is the GOOD NEWS that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, that He died and rose again, and that through faith in Him we can be forgiven, redeemed, and made NEW.

John 8:31-32 reminds us that when we continue in His Word, we will know the truth, and the truth will make us free.

And sometimes the truth we need to remember is simply this:

God's correction is meant to CHANGE your direction, not DESTROY your identity.

So the next time you feel that heaviness creeping in, ask yourself a question.

Is this drawing me closer to Jesus?

Is it revealing something I need to repent of?

Is it leading me toward obedience, healing, and restoration?

Or is it simply replaying my past, attacking my worth, and convincing me that I'll never be enough?

Because when the Holy Spirit convicts you, the answer is to RESPOND.

Repent.

Surrender.

Make things right where you can.

And receive the forgiveness and grace that Jesus offers.

But when condemnation tries to drag you back into the shame of something you've already surrendered to the Lord, stand on the truth of His Word.

You don't have to keep wearing the label.

You don't have to keep rehearsing the failure.

You don't have to keep living as though the blood of Jesus wasn't enough.

The same Jesus who calls you to repentance is the One who offers you restoration.

And I don't know about you, but THAT makes me want to shout!

So today, friend, I DARE you.

Rip off the label of condemnation.

Shred the lies that say you'll never change.

And replace them with the truth of God's Word.

You are not beyond His grace.

You are not beyond His forgiveness.

You are not beyond His ability to restore.

Don't run FROM the Father because of conviction. Run TO the Father because of His mercy.

Because conviction is not the end of your story.

Through Jesus Christ, it can be the beginning of a brand-new chapter.

Today's Reflection Am I experiencing godly conviction that is calling me to repentance, or am I carrying condemnation that is keeping me trapped in shame? Is there something I need to surrender to the Lord today? Have I truly accepted His forgiveness, or am I still identifying myself by my past?

Today's Prayer Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me enough to correct me and for extending grace when I fall short. Help me recognize the difference between the conviction of Your Holy Spirit and the condemnation that keeps me bound in shame. Give me a heart that is quick to repent, willing to change, and eager to walk in obedience to Your Word. Remind me that my failures do not have to define my future and that through Jesus Christ, forgiveness and restoration are possible. Help me receive Your mercy and walk in the freedom You have provided. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 5

More Than Enough

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:5 (KJV)

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.”

Have you ever felt like you just weren't enough?

Not talented enough. Not qualified enough. Not spiritual enough. Not pretty enough. Not strong enough. The list could go on and on.

We live in a world that constantly reminds us of what we lack. Social media tells us we aren't successful enough. Comparison convinces us we aren't as gifted as someone else. And sometimes, our own insecurities become the loudest voices in our lives.

But can I remind you of something today?

Your identity in Christ was never supposed to be built upon your own ability. It was always meant to be established in HIS sufficiency!

Somewhere along the way, we've allowed the enemy to convince us that our weaknesses disqualify us from walking in the purpose God has placed upon our lives.

But think about Moses. He questioned his ability to speak. Gideon saw himself as the least in his family. Jeremiah thought he was too young. Yet God didn't choose them because they had everything

figured out. He chose them knowing exactly what they lacked!

And here's what I love...

God doesn't need you to be everything. He needs you to trust the ONE who is!

Philippians 4:13 reminds us, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Notice that Scripture doesn't say we can do all things because we're talented, educated, experienced, or qualified. It says we can do all things **THROUGH CHRIST!**

So maybe it's time we stop identifying ourselves by everything we think we're missing and start recognizing everything we've been given through Him.

You may not feel capable, but He is your strength.

You may not feel qualified, but He is the One who calls and equips.

You may not feel worthy, but His grace has made a way.

And you may not feel like enough, but **the Christ who lives within you is MORE THAN ENOUGH!**

Don't spend another day allowing insecurity to speak louder than your identity.

You don't have to be enough all by yourself. Your sufficiency is found in HIM.

Reflect & Respond What areas of your life have you allowed feelings of inadequacy or comparison to define your identity? Take a moment today to surrender those insecurities to the Lord and remind yourself that your strength, worth, and purpose are found in Christ.

Today's Reminder: I may not have everything it takes on my own, but through Christ, I have everything I need to walk in what He has called me to do.

DAY 6

Maturing in Your Identity — Part 1

When Pain Meets Purpose

Scripture: James 1:2-4 (KJV)

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

"Manure will lead you to mature." — Pastor Michael Shrum

Now, I know what you're thinking. What in the WORLD does manure have to do with spiritual maturity?!

Well, hang with me for just a minute!

We all love the idea of growth. We pray for it. We ask the Lord to take us deeper, make us stronger, and help us become everything He's called us to be.

But what we don't always love is the PROCESS that produces it.

Because sometimes the very things that help us grow are the things we'd rather not have to walk through.

The disappointment. The betrayal. The misunderstandings. The rejection. The conversations that never happened and the apologies we never received.

You know... the messy stuff.

The MANURE.

But isn't it something how a gardener can take something unpleasant and use it to help produce something beautiful?

And sometimes, that's exactly what the Lord does with the messes of our lives.

What the enemy intended to bury you in, God can use to grow you through.

You see, you were designed and defined by your Heavenly Father. Not by the people who misunderstood you. Not by the ones who walked away. Not even by the ones who smiled in your face one day and seemed to take a complete U-turn the next.

And can we just be REAL for a minute?!

Sometimes the hardest hurt to heal from is the hurt that comes from the people you least expected it from.

It's that gut-wrenching kind of hurt.

The kind you thought you had already healed from, until another situation happens and suddenly your mind starts replaying EVERYTHING from the past.

The words.

The conversations.

The way it made you feel.

And before you know it, you're fighting a battle in your mind that you thought you had already won.

I've been there.

But I'm learning something.

Maturity isn't always measured by what you say. Sometimes it's measured by what you choose NOT to say.

The enemy would love nothing more than to keep you responding out of old wounds instead of walking in your God-given identity.

He wants you offended. Distracted. Bitter. Constantly defending yourself against every accusation and misunderstanding.

But friend, you don't have to answer every accusation to know who you are.

You are NOT who the enemy says you are.

You ARE who God says you are!

And sometimes the greatest evidence of spiritual maturity is being able to remain grounded in that truth when everything around you is trying to pull a reaction out of you.

I remember being in an interview one time and asking a potential employee a pretty standard question.

"How would you handle a situation if there was difficulty between you and another coworker?"

Her answer was so simple, but I wasn't prepared for how deeply it would speak to me.

She said something along the lines of:

"I learned a long time ago that typically the difficulty or struggle someone has with you has absolutely nothing to do with you. Sometimes it's an internal struggle they're dealing with, and unfortunately, you're just the one it gets unloaded on. So I listen. I let them process what they're feeling. And then, depending on the situation, we determine the next steps. But often, simply allowing someone to get something off their chest is all they really needed."

AND BOYYYYY.

Did I feel THAT in my soul!

I don't think she had any idea what was happening on the inside of me at that moment.

Because later that same evening, I found myself wrestling with a personal situation that made her words come rushing back.

And all I could think was, THANK YOU, JESUS.

I needed that interview.

Probably a whole lot worse than she needed that job!

Isn't it just like the Lord to use the most unexpected people, in the most ordinary moments, to speak directly to something you've been carrying?

And here's what I began to realize.

Not every difficult interaction is a personal attack. Sometimes you're simply witnessing the overflow of a battle someone else is fighting.

Now, that doesn't excuse hurtful behavior. It doesn't mean you have to tolerate mistreatment or abandon healthy boundaries.

But it DOES mean you can choose to respond with wisdom instead of allowing someone else's struggle to become your identity.

And that brings me to a little girl in Scripture who I believe understood something about maturity long before most adults ever do.

In 2 Kings 5, we read about Naaman, a mighty commander of the Syrian army who suffered from leprosy.

But tucked into that story is a young Israelite girl who had been taken captive from her homeland and made to serve Naaman's wife.

Think about that for a moment.

She had been taken from her home, her people, and everything familiar to her.

She had every reason to be angry.

Every reason to be bitter.

Every reason to remain silent when she learned of Naaman's condition.

But instead, she spoke up.

She told her mistress about the prophet in Samaria who could help Naaman.

A little girl with what looked like a powerless position, but a powerful purpose.

She could have allowed her pain to silence her.

Instead, she allowed her faith to speak.

And because she spoke, Naaman was eventually led to the prophet Elisha, where God brought healing into his life.

WHEW!

Her life had been turned upside down, but her faith was still standing on the ROCK.

She didn't allow what had happened TO her to erase what God had placed INSIDE her.

And friend, I wonder how many times we've allowed the pain of our past to keep us from being used in someone else's present.

Because here's something I've come to understand.

Your hurt wasn't just about you. And your healing may not be just for you, either.

Sometimes the very thing you've cried over becomes the testimony that helps somebody else make it through.

The revelation God gives you in your pain may become the very word of encouragement someone else desperately needs.

**Today's Reflection Am I allowing past hurt to influence how I respond to others?
How might God use something I've walked through to encourage someone else?**

Today's Prayer Heavenly Father, thank You that my identity is found in You and not in the opinions or actions of others. Help me grow in wisdom and maturity, especially when I'm hurt or misunderstood. Teach me to respond with grace, recognize when to listen, and trust You with the things I cannot control. Use the difficult seasons of my life to develop something that can bring hope and

encouragement to someone else. In Jesus' name, Amen.

DAY 7

Maturing in Your Identity — Part 2

The Beauty of the Process

Scripture: Romans 5:3-4 (KJV)

"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope."

Have you ever thought about how a pearl is formed?

A pearl can begin when an irritant becomes trapped inside certain mollusks. Rather than simply leaving it exposed, the creature gradually coats it with layers of nacre, forming something beautiful over time.

And isn't that a picture of what God can do in our lives? The irritation doesn't look beautiful in the beginning. The process isn't always comfortable. And the transformation doesn't happen overnight. But layer by layer, season by season, God can produce something valuable in the very place that once caused discomfort.

Someone once said, "A glow stick can't glow without being broken."

And while I don't believe God requires us to be broken in order to be useful, I DO believe He is able to bring light out of places where we thought there would only be darkness.

That's the beauty of spiritual maturity.

It's not pretending you were never hurt.

It's not acting like the betrayal didn't sting.

It's not allowing people to mistreat you while you silently suffer.

It's learning how to carry the wisdom from what you've been through without continuing to carry the bitterness.

It's learning to listen before reacting.

To pray before responding.

To recognize when someone else's words are coming from their own wounds.

And to understand that you don't have to prove who you are every time somebody questions your character.

Deuteronomy 11:24 speaks of the territory God promised His people as they walked in obedience to Him.

And while that promise was specifically given to Israel, it reminds me of something about our spiritual walk today.

There are places of growth God is calling us into that require us to keep moving forward.

We cannot spend our entire lives standing in yesterday's hurt and expect to experience everything God wants to develop in us tomorrow.

Sometimes maturity looks like taking the next step even when you never received the explanation you wanted.

Sometimes it looks like extending grace while maintaining boundaries.

And sometimes it looks like saying, "Lord, I don't understand why that happened, but I refuse to let it change who You've called me to be."

Because you are not defined by the offense.

You are not defined by the rejection.

You are not defined by the accusation.

You are defined by your Heavenly Father.

And the same God who knew your name before you were formed is the One who is still shaping your character today.

So maybe the question isn't simply, "Why did I have to go through that?"

Maybe the better question is, "Lord, what are You growing in me THROUGH that?"

Because the goal isn't just to get through the mess.

It's to allow the Lord to mature us in the middle of it.

And one day, you may find yourself sitting across from someone who is walking through the very thing you once cried yourself to sleep over.

Only this time, instead of responding from a place of pain, you'll be able to speak from a place of healing.

And what once wounded you may become part of the wisdom God uses to help someone else.

Don't let the manure make you bitter when God can use it to make you BETTER.

Grow through it, friend.

There's purpose on the other side of the process.

Today's Reflection What is God developing in me through my current season? Am I holding on to bitterness from something He is calling me to heal from? How can I allow the lessons I've learned to produce spiritual growth?