

Who are You?

Who has God created you to be?



Who has God created you to be?

Introduction

One of the most challenging things for me was when we first began the Amarillo base of No Boundaries International. There was so much work to be done. Honestly, it was overwhelming. I can remember asking Dr. Lori where to even begin. Her response was the most challenging response I've ever heard. The response was simply, "Look at where God has you & start there." As I gulped saying, "OK", I remember thinking "What?"

Looking back on that moment, I realize I had to know who I was, why I was created, and what gifts had been given to me in order to know where to begin.

Through this study, I want to help you learn those same answers. How can we take someone somewhere we've never been?

In 20+ years of full-time ministry, there is one common theme amongst the majority of people-- "Why am I here?" and "What's my purpose?". Both of those questions can be placed into one deep question, "Who am I?".

Most would agree, as believers, are to look different, think differently, and be different from the world. So why do we take those three words - "who am I" and try to answer them within the world?

This study is intended to be used as a guide--don't rush through it. Rather meditate on each section. You might even be thinking, "Why another devotion on who we are?". The answer is twofold. First, too many believers are struggling with depression & anxiety - living in captivity. The second is that many go through life not knowing their purpose. That leads them to go from person to person trying to imitate whom they are rather than walking fully in their destiny.

Session 1 - What's Your Relationship with Jesus?

Session 2 - How do you hear from God?

Session 3 - What are you passionate about?

Session 4 - What activities recharge you?

Session 5 - What activities drain you?

Session 6 - What makes you feel 'on top of the world'?

Session 7 - If you could do anything, what would you do?

What's Your Relationship with Jesus?

Day 1

As you reflect and examine your relationship, let's first look at what a relationship is.

Relationship means the way in which two or more concepts, objects, or people are connected, or the state of being connected or the way in which two or more people or groups regard and behave toward each other.

Notice that a relationship is two or more – it's not just one-sided.

There are too many times we get caught up in "leading people to Christ" and forgetting to teach them to walk with Him daily – minute by minute. Obviously, we want to lead people to Christ. We just can't stop there.

Scripture is clear if you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth, you will be saved. But that's not enough for me! I'm so thankful for my salvation; however, I was created for relationship. I wasn't created to just have salvation. There are so many promises throughout the Word that we miss out on if we don't have relationship. Take a look at just a few of God's promises:

Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. Isaiah 41:10

You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Isaiah 26:3

Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; He will never fail you or abandon you. Deuteronomy 31:8

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world. John 16:33

The Lord directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will never fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand. Psalm 37:23-24

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:28-29

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free. John 8:36

Relationships take time and effort. My husband & I have been married for over 20 years. Daily we are still learning new things about each other. And our relationship will only go stronger if we spend time together.

Did you know Jesus wants to have a relationship with you? Let's be real, all three members of the Trinity want a relationship with you--God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The world today doesn't really encourage that. It's all about how fast we can get to our destination rather than building relationships and enjoying the journey.

Day 1 - Continued

Think about that for a moment. If you don't believe me just observe what you see at the store next time there is a long line. People don't embrace the stillness rather, they are frustrated that they are having to wait. Still unsure? Watch the crowd at the airport when the flight is delayed. We know the airline isn't delaying the flight just to slow us down, but typically it's for our safety--safety from weather or even safety to make a repair to the aircraft. Still, nobody is interested in that - rather they just have to get to their destination. Now, look at that through a spiritual lens. There is no question our destination (Heaven) is our ultimate gift. But I don't want to miss out on the journey. God wants our love and devotion along the way. He has great (abundant) things for us along the trip. On a marquee at a church were the words, "God wants to know you". That sign was not speaking the truth but rather confusing the truth. God already knows each of us. He wants us to know Him!

I believe we can tell how our relationship is in a variety of ways.

- What comes out when you are squeezed?
- What do you think on?
- Are you what would be called a "worrier"?

There are certainly other ways that we will look at later, but for the next few days, I want us to look at these three.

Obviously, we have to know where we are going before we can enjoy the journey. Without salvation - there really is no journey.

Questions to think on:

- Do you know Jesus or just know of Him?
- Are you focused on the destination or the journey?

Scripture to meditate on today:

For the Lord, your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs. Zephaniah 3:17

Activation:

- Spend time in prayer today, then stay there - you might want to turn on some instrumental music if it helps. Give Him an opportunity to speak to you in your time with Him. Ask Him what He wants to reveal to you today.

What's Your Relationship with Jesus?

Day 2 – What Comes Out?

What comes out when you are squeezed?

Have you ever thought about how easy is to spend time enjoying Jesus when things are going well? Oftentimes, that's not really true – most would say “oh yes” but it's been my experience that we have three groups of believers when it comes to being squeezed.

Group 1 forgets to spend time with Him when life is going well – so then when trouble comes they are trying to search for their armor. Because they haven't hidden His words in their heart, they lash out, causing damage, and even turning to violence (drinking, harsh words, anger, etc).

Group 2 has a superficial relationship meaning they might spend time with Him by reading the Word, memorizing scripture, and praying. That sounds wonderful! But they read the Word & memorize scripture out of duty – not out of love or desire. They pray not out of worship but out of telling God what they need. Never really expecting Him to move. For this group, when they are squeezed they respond by blaming God, withdrawing, becoming depressed, and/or anxious.

Then there's Group 3. This group is in the Word, applying the Word to their life, praying with expectation, praying for a deeper revelation, praying to see where He is working, and listening. When this group is squeezed, they respond on their knees, the part that comes out is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.

Which group do you fall into today? The reason I say “today” is because you might jump around from group to group until the day you can stand strong in group 3. We aren't perfect. We aren't always going to have the relationship we can. But, I'd much rather spend my life striving for that relationship rather than just holding on until my day of salvation reaches its final destination.

No question--God has a perfect destination that He is preparing for you (John 14:1-3) but He also has an incredible journey He wants you to go on with Him along the way.

Questions to think on:

- Which group do you typically find yourself in?
- How does the way you respond reflect your relationship with Jesus?

Scripture to meditate on:

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine." Isaiah 55:8

Activation: When something goes in a direction other than you planned, before responding take a second to seek Jesus. It can even be as simple as “Jesus, help!”. See how He transforms what comes out when you are squeezed.

What's Your Relationship with Jesus?

Day 3 - What's on your mind?

What do you think on?

Do you ever catch yourself daydreaming? Of course, we all do that. But did you know that even the things we think on can affect our day? God knew our mind was an incredible thing--He created it! He also knew we could get caught up thinking about things we shouldn't. That is why He gave us a list of things we can think on followed up with an explanation of why we are to think on those things.

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me - everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:8-9

It is going to take time, but you really can train your brain to think on those things. If you change your brain, you change your life! Renew your mind!

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Romans 12:2

Questions to think on:

- What do you spend most of your time thinking about?

Scripture to meditate on:

And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Philippians 4:8

Activation:

Knowing that today is such a busy time, start somewhere - even if only for 15 minutes--really make an effort to think on the things mentioned in Philippians 4:8. Sometimes, there are things that have to be done--if those come up during your designated time, simply write those things down so you don't have to worry about forgetting. It's ok to tell someone (even yourself) "I'm not thinking on that right now". Make note of how your focused time changed your day.

What's Your Relationship with Jesus?

Day 4 - Why worry?

Are you what would be called a "worrier"?

Lastly, let's look at worry. Do people ever tell you that you worry too much? Did you know that 92% of what we worry about never happens? But what about the small percentage that does....have you noticed it's typically not as bad as the scenario you created in your mind? There's an explanation--God gives us grace today for the things we will face.

"That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life - whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And why worry about clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith? So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. Matthew 6:25-33

Tomorrow He will give us grace for those things we face tomorrow. So, when we worry about something that might happen two weeks from now--we don't have grace for that. He doesn't give grace for something that is not happening. Please don't misunderstand, I'm not talking about being concerned about something. There is a difference between worry and concern.

In my professional opinion, fear, worry, and anxiety are some of the most powerful ways the enemy infiltrates our life. When we are focused on "the sky is falling, the sky is falling" then we are not able to walk in the fullness of Christ.

Jesus didn't just come to die for our sins, but He also came to set the captives free. That doesn't mean the "big" things--He wants us free from addiction, fear, anxiety, depression, worry, anger, and so on. The first step would be to examine your life: are you in captivity? Jesus wants to set you free. He will always do His part! Will you trust in Him today? Lay those things you ruminate on down at His feet and focus on whatever is good, whatever is lovely....

Questions to think on:

- Do you worry about things rather than laying them at the feet of Jesus?
- Do you automatically look for the worst to happen or do you expectantly await to see how God is going to move?

Scripture to meditate on:

Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. 1 Peter 5:7

Activation:

Ask Jesus to show you if there is anything in your life that you are trying to "handle" vs allowing Him to handle it.

How Do You Hear From God?

Day 5

One of those most discouraging statements I've heard from believers was, "God doesn't speak - that's why He gave us His word". Honestly that's a lie from the evil one. Satan would love for us all to believe God never speaks. But, if that were true-- why would He give us the Holy Spirit?

God speaks--we just have to learn how to listen and be willing to receive. How He speaks is unique to each person and each situation. He speaks audibly at times, but in my life, I can only think of one time that I actually looked around the room because I felt like the voice I heard had to be just right there. He also speaks through others. Maybe you are praying about a decision when suddenly someone says something confirming the decision you need to make. They don't even know about your pending decision. He can also speak through a feeling. Have you ever been prompted to do something and you know it's out of the norm for you? Some will refer to that voice inside of you as a "gut feeling". Personally, I don't believe in that, what I do believe in is Holy Spirit inside of you will prompt you, will reveal truth to you, and will give you revelation. These are just a few ways He might be speaking.

Now for the big question. How do you know if it's from God? Again, we go to our brains. He knew how complex He created us and how easily distracted we could become. God is faithful and He cannot and will not contradict His written word which means, if what you hear doesn't produce the fruit of the Spirit, it's NOT from God.

What if you pray and still hear nothing? What if you go through your day looking for Jesus & see nothing?

First, examine your life. Is there something in it that is blocking you from hearing or seeing? If the answer is no - then move forward, it might be He wants you to sit in the stillness and calmness of His presence a little longer. But, if the answer is yes, we have to deal with that before moving on.

Think about building a pyramid. If you skip a section it will not stand the test of time. So often we want to identify a problem and call it good. We think admitting it is all it takes, then we can move forward. But, often it requires a little more. We have to admit and release it! For example, if it's unforgiveness that is the issue and you admit you have unforgiveness what change comes? We have to recognize it, then forgive. Some of you are thinking "but you don't understand what 'Sally Sue' did!". You are right - I don't and can't. But, we serve a Savior that does. Jesus was beaten, mocked, spit on, and hung on a cross. He had every 'right' as we'd say to be angry. But, instead, He said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they have done." Jesus endured the ultimate betrayal, the ultimate trauma, and He showed us the ultimate forgiveness.

We know the passage Ephesians 6:12 that tells us the battle is not against flesh. In verse 11, the Bible tells us that we must put on our full armor so we can be ready. Scripture even specifically tells us what that armor is in verses 13-18. John even notes how Jesus tells the disciples bad things are going to happen (John 16:33). We have a choice. We can focus on those bad things and allow them to consume us or we can stand on the fact that Jesus has overcome the world! The world today doesn't make walking in victory easy but it is part of our inheritance and so worth it!

Now that we've resolved whatever was hindering us let's move on.

Ask Jesus to give you eyes to see and ears to hear. Recognize that He doesn't have to send a burning bush or a shining star-- sometimes He speaks in a still small voice. We need to learn how to hear that voice even in the midst of chaos. If you are just unable to physically go to a quiet place, take a deep breath, and imagine standing in the middle of the eye of the storm. There is calmness and quiet there. Then ask Jesus to give you revelation and wait there with Him. Don't be in a hurry to leave but rather wait on Him to show you which way to go. Just like He parted the Red Sea, He will cover you with His grace and part the chaos so you can walk right through.

What Are You Passionate About?

Day 6

Here are a few definitions about passion:

Passion is defined as an intense driving conviction. It's a powerful feeling of enthusiasm toward someone or something. Passion is the feeling that nothing else exists. It's loving yourself as if you were a rainbow with gold at both ends. Passion gives you a reason to keep learning and working towards your mastery. Passion, fervor, ardor, enthusiasm, and zeal mean intense emotion and compelling action. Passion applies to all emotion that is deeply stirring or ungovernable. "Gave into his passions and fervor" implies a warm and steady emotion.

Now let's look at Romans 7:5-6 and Galatians 5:24-26.

Before we get started make a list of things you would say you are passionate about.

What creates passion?

- Jesus
- Life Experience
- Mentor/Teacher

Do you believe Jesus gives us a passion for certain things? Passion for the lost; passion for the sick; passion for the poor; passion for justice...the list could go on and on.

Now we know not all passion comes from God. There are multiple scriptures that tell us to walk away from our fleshly passion. We know that Scripture talks about sinful passion, but I don't believe we are talking about the same thing. Rather we are going to be looking at those things Jesus has embedded in us. As we grow closer to Him that passion grows too. So, as we look at passion, I want us to take time to discern what are passions given by God and what are passions of our flesh that we need to release. How do we know if the passion is from God or our own selfish desire? Ask Jesus! He will show you. Once the desires of our hearts line up with His plans--there's truly nothing we can't do.

Go back to your list of passions. Think about those things for a moment. Don't be concerned about how long or how short your list is. This is your list. Now, I want you to take some time to ask someone close to you what they think you are passionate about. Do any of your answers match up?

Why do you think I'd be interested in what others see? First, don't mistake what I'm asking. I'm not asking you to put too much into what others see. But rather this exercise helps us to identify if our words and actions match what is truly in our hearts.

Questions to think on:

- Jesus, what passions did you embed in me?
- Jesus, what passions do I need to walk away from because they are from my sinful nature?

Scripture to meditate on:

For you see, even though I proclaim the good news, I can't take the credit for my labors, for I am compelled to fulfill my duty by completing this work. It would be agony to me if I did not constantly preach the gospel. 1 Corinthians 9:16

Activation:

Pick one thing that Jesus has placed inside of you. Today, look for opportunities to do that very thing. Remember, those opportunities might look different than you expect--ask Jesus to open your eyes to what He wants you to see.

What Are You Passionate about?

Day 7

Certainly, our life experiences can make us passionate. But, we need to make sure it's passion and not retaliation or redemption we are seeking. Sadly many of us are passionate about something because of a bad experience. I 100% believe that the trauma we have gone through does not have to define us because God's word says that all things work together for good for those who believe. I don't believe it's automatic--no doubt God will do His part. But I do believe that we have to do our part too. We must allow God to heal us from the inside out. If we try to change the world from a place of hurt, we are going to leave a wake of hurt and despair all under the name of Jesus.

Look back at your list, as you think about life experiences - is there something that has happened that you are seeking justice for rather than desiring others to experience the victory? If you haven't experienced supernatural victory yet, NOW IS A GREAT TIME! Will you choose today to let Jesus have justice and you walk in victory?

The other part that we have to examine on the list is, is there pain you have caused and you are seeking redemption for? If that's you, we have great news. Jesus tells us when we ask for forgiveness of our sins--He forgives us and that sin is as far as the east is from the west which means "it is finished". There is nothing more we can do--the redemption is already there. The thing you have to decide is, did you truly repent--not just feel guilty because you got caught--but truly experience repentance. If you did repent, have you taken time to forgive yourself? Jesus remembers it no more. If He can forgive us, why can't we forgive ourselves?

The third way I want to look at is through a mentor/teacher. Has someone inspired you? God often uses others to ignite a fire in us that is so hard to explain. The mentor/teacher is there to fan the flame and help you discover YOUR destiny, not teach you to walk in theirs.

Often times as I speak to young adults, someone will say "I want to be like you". Flattering as that is it's also heartbreaking. Then I think about how people lead today--they give you steps (their steps) to be successful. They tell you to "do what I do". Even in the workplace, many don't inspire creativity and independent thinking. A true leader will show you things they've done or how they do something while encouraging you to dream, to imagine, and to go for it. The world doesn't need another me--the world needs a you!

As similar as my daughter & I are, there are still great differences. Those differences allow us to be able to do more. If all we ever do is exactly what someone else is doing, then there are people not being reached, things not being accomplished, and services not being provided.

You were created for greatness. Greatness might mean you are known throughout the world. But greatness might also be providing strength and calmness that others can draw from. Whatever it is that you were created for is "greatness" when we learn what that is and how to walk in it.

Now the question -

What are you passionate about?

Where did that passion come from?

Is there any hurt associated with that passion?

Question for Jesus:

Jesus, can you use my passion?

What Activities Recharge You?

Day 8

Human nature wants to answer this question by looking at things we enjoy. But, I want us to look a little deeper. Just because we enjoy something doesn't mean it recharges us. This certainly could fall into the self-care category.

Think about your car--it was made to go. If you want your car to continue going, you have to do maintenance (self-care). A car has to have the oil changed, tires rotated/replaced, windshield wipers replaced, etc. But what happens if you do all the maintenance like clockwork and the car runs out of fuel? There's no maintenance that will get it going, it has to be filled up. We are the same way. There are things we have to do to maintain a healthy life, such as, eating right, exercising, sleeping, spending time with Jesus, etc. But, we also have to know when we need to be refilled/recharged.

Today burnout is an enormous issue, especially in certain fields. Many contribute burnout to a lack of self-care. Of course, that plays a part, but I also think we forget to consider that refilling our tank is part of it too. In my opinion, we need to do a better job of defining self-care. Teaching people how to maintain a healthy lifestyle is extremely important but it seems we tend to stop there and never really look at what it takes to be refilled/recharged. In the event we are teaching that, we tend to skip the healthy lifestyle. So it takes both maintenance and recharge. Think of the car again. The maintenance is virtually the same no matter the year, make, or model. But the fuel is different--some need gasoline, some premium, some no ethanol, and some electricity. Some cars can go for 300 miles, some 400. Not only does the mileage affect the gas but also wind, speed, and the type of driving. We watch that gauge in order to never run out of gas. If we do that in our vehicles - shouldn't we do that with ourselves?

So, how do you know what recharges you? Think of it this way. Have you ever had a time you were just grumpy or exhausted then you did something and suddenly you feel like you could go for days? Don't try to think through your answer too much and certainly don't compare yourself to others. It's going to be different for everyone. For example, I love my family. I love seeing them and doing things with them, but as much as I enjoy that, it doesn't recharge me. It's certainly something I need, but it doesn't recharge me. That might sound horrible to some of you but remember a recharge is something that should be easy once we do it. I don't know about you, but for me, family isn't always easy.

We are to run the race like in 1 Corinthians 9:24-26. We have to make sure we are staying fit by doing maintenance (self-care), and refueling before running out of gas. It's not just a race to the finish line, but rather think of it as a great treasure hunt. The ultimate "find" is in Heaven, but as we go along the way God gives us "buried treasure" that we can find and enjoy now.

Questions to think on:

- **What recharges you?**
- **Do you do it enough?**

Scripture to meditate on:

As for us, we have all of these great witnesses who encircle us like clouds. So we must let go of every wound that has pierced us and the sin we so easily fall into. Then we will be able to run life's marathon race with passion and determination, for the path has been already marked out before us. Hebrews 12:1

Question for Jesus:

- Jesus, why do I need to take time to recharge?

What Activities Drain you?

Day 9

We all have these things we have to do but would rather not. The question I want us to look at would be: are those things that drain you, things you *have* to do?

I've never found anywhere in Scripture where God wants us doing things that absolutely drain us. Don't misunderstand. There's a difference between not liking something, being tired afterward or just being absolutely drained. Being drained is talking about being totally empty. It would be like someone putting a large hole in your gas tank - no matter how much fuel you put in, it just runs out.

Typically I've found that those things that drain people aren't always huge things. Nothing drains me more than having to read an instruction manual or watching a tutorial. If I can flip to the part I need, I'm good, but if I have to go through it completely to find what I need, it's daunting. So, I have people in my life that enjoy that type of attention to detail. They research and read it all, give me the highlights, and everyone is happy. In that same way, if they had to make a quick decision, they would absolutely not have any fuel left in their tank, which is why they have people like me in their life.

But what if the task you are thinking about has to be done by you? I believe if it truly has to be done by you, then maybe it's as simple as changing your perspective.

As we are talking about who we are, it might seem odd that we are even spending time on the things that put a hole in your tank. We can't just look at one little part, we have to look at the bigger picture. It all goes together. Take a moment to make a list of the things you do on a regular basis that you don't like. Once you have your list, determine if you just don't enjoy them or if the activity really drains you. Before going to the next step take a moment with Jesus. Ask Him to give you fresh eyes as you dive deeper into your list. Now, look at your list of the things you don't enjoy--why? For example, I don't enjoy laundry, but I do enjoy having options when I go to my closet. So as I do laundry, I keep my focus on what I might want to wear next week or how much I love crawling into a bed with freshly washed sheets. Many of the things we do that we just don't like to do are things that we still have to do. So find the joy in it and look beyond the activity.

Here's the harder thing....on your list, look at those things that put a hole in your gas tank. Are they really things you have to do or are they things that you think you have to do? Ask Jesus. If there are things that you have to do, does He have someone that He's placed in your life to help you? Often we are more concerned about being seen as weak and we don't even notice the people God has placed in our lives to help us with those tasks that we could release to someone else. When we have a hole in our tank, we often are so busy trying to fill the hole, we believe we have to have total control, just to keep going when in fact, if we'd allow others to help, we'd be able to fill the hole and keep going forward.

Questions to think on:

- **How's your tank?**
- **Is there an activity or task you need to release?**

Scripture to meditate on:

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:28-31

Activation: It doesn't matter how young or how old we are, we all get tired. The only way to continue running the race before us is to HOPE IN THE LORD. How are you doing with this? Spend some time today with Jesus asking Him if you are truly putting your hope in the Lord.

What's On the Outside?

Day 10

For some, this might be a strange topic to cover in a Bible study, but let's do it anyway. This might feel more geared toward ladies, but believe me--men are affected by this too--just maybe not to the full extent.

Have you ever noticed how your mood affects what you are going to wear? When we don't feel good, we want to just be in PJs. As for me, I normally want bright clothes or black (just because black makes me feel skinny). But, I want us to think about the clothes that we have and how much time we spend deciding what to wear each day. Why do we do that? If we are honest, we typically wear clothes that make us feel good or somehow express who we are. The part I want us to look at is the relationship between what we express and how we feel on the inside.

Here's what I mean by that, after being really sick I couldn't do much. But, one day I came into my bedroom, put on my makeup, fixed my hair, and put on something cute--I was desperate to feel better. It worked at least for a little bit, but once the makeup started fading, the clothes were just not as comfortable as my PJ's. I realized I was on the road to recovery, but I wasn't well yet. I needed more time. Now that was when I was physically sick. But, what happens when it's an emotional sickness? People tend to use their clothes as a way to hide what's going on inside. In that case, our clothes are expressing what we want others to see. We don't want to try to cover up our emotional struggles with our clothes, but we also need to know that God created us as an entire package--inside and out. He wants us to walk victoriously. Recognizing along the way that we need to take care of the inside and out!

Think about what's in your closet. What do your clothes express? Do you have clothes in there that put a smile on your face? Or do you have clothes that you believe just need to be thrown out? What are you waiting for - throw them out! Even in our clothes, we are to glorify God. If you are like me, rarely do I think, "God what should I wear today". Remember God cares about every detail of our life, even what we wear. As we wrap up today, I'd like to share a story with you.

I'm standing in my closet, as I pick up multiple shirts trying to decide what to wear. I can't seem to make a decision. Finally, I simply say "Jesus I need help today". My eyes were drawn to a shirt that I rarely wear. It says "Save the Humans - Stop Human Trafficking". I put the shirt on and went on about my day full of errands. One stop was meeting a friend for lunch at a restaurant that I didn't normally go to. As I walked in and placed my order, the lady behind the counter looks up at me with tear-filled eyes. Her words penetrated my heart. She said, "do you know anyone that works with trafficking victims?" Of course, by this point, I didn't even remember the shirt I had on. I responded by sharing a little bit about what we do (working with human trafficking victims). The worker began to cry as she said her sister was being trafficked and she felt so alone until I walked in with that shirt on! Are you kidding? Jesus set me up! All because I was willing to trust him with even the smallest detail of my day, He used that shirt to bring hope and encouragement into a life that day.

What a difference it makes when we walk in victory - inside and out! Jesus wants every part of us. He cares about every part of us and most of all - HE HAS A PLAN FOR EVERY ONE OF US!

Questions for Jesus:

- Jesus, does my outside match what's on the inside?
- Jesus, are there things that I am holding on to that it's time to release?

Activation:

- Ask Jesus to guide you today - even in the smallest details. Make note of how He worked even in the small things.

If You Could Do Anything?

Day 11

Now that you have a more clear picture of who you are and how to hear from God, let's spend a little time dreaming. Thinking about the passion God has placed in you, what would you do if you could do anything? Ponder that as we take a deeper look at dreaming about something bigger than ourselves. For some, they are afraid to dream because they don't want to be disappointed, causing them to say "what's the point". Some have become so complacent that they almost feel like it's wrong to dream. They typically hold onto the scripture that tells us we are to be content with what we have. Then others are so consumed by dreaming they lose sight of reality.

When I say "let's dream", I want us to dream according to His will and His plan for our lives. Think about Ephesians 1:8. Now think about the verse so many quote, "I can do all things". They tend to stop there and forget that it says according to His will. Even reflecting on the scripture that says He will give you the desires of your heart. People take that to mean if I want it, God will give it to me. That's not what He is talking about. It's when our desires line up with His, we are thinking about the things He tells you to. "Whatever is true" and the outcome of those are going to produce the Fruit of the Spirit! When you can dream like that, you truly can do all things through Christ.

Look at the picture on the front of this study for a moment. Look at the amount of cloud coverage. If we look at things from the earth, often all we can see are the clouds above us. We see all the things that stop us from seeing the sun. When God puts something in our hearts, often we look at all the barriers. Sometimes it's like looking at all the clouds--we can't see the SON. But look where the eagle is soaring--he's soaring above the clouds--it's the most beautiful sight you have ever seen! There might be some turbulence to get through the clouds--but once we go where He leads, everything looks different. When we look at things--shift our perspective--we look from Heaven to Earth instead of from Earth to Heaven. The view from Heaven is breathtaking and beautiful. God wants you to trust Him, to break through the challenges and obstacles, recognizing the beauty He created you for.

Reflect on the scripture that says He came so that we might have an abundant life. Often we spend so much time focused on salvation and eternity that we never take the time to enjoy and reflect on the abundant life or what it truly means to "Hope in the Lord". Those two things go together, along with "God will give us the desires of our hearts".

Picture a pyramid - we have to have the foundation of our salvation. Once we have that foundation, then we can move up and learn to trust Him--putting our Hope in Him--casting our fear on Him.

That leads us to the abundant life, where we persevere, run with endurance and walk in that perfect life (not being perfect), thinking on things that are true.

Once we have that level down, we soar with eagles--finding joy in every situation. The Bible doesn't tell us to rejoice FOR all situations, but rather IN all situations. When we can do that, we recognize that all things work together. Keep in mind that doesn't mean it was God's plan for murder. When those things come we are to remember John 16:33--know that the God of the universe is going to bring beauty out of the ashes!

What is God calling you to do? Will you soar with eagles above the clouds?

What is your something bigger?