

SECRET
STRUGGLES

Finding Freedom From Hidden Bondage

Angel Walston

Secret Struggles by Angel Walston
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ISBN-13: 978-1-7322214-0-6
ISBN-10: 1-7322214-0-5
Printed in the United States of America.

Cover Design by Angel Walston
Front Cover Photo by Brittany Rose
Edited by Amanda Pittman

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I dedicate this book to my mother, Renee, who I like to call Martha on occasion. Thank you for always supporting, loving, and believing in who God has allowed me to be. I know that I can always depend on you to be my biggest cheerleader.

I love you,

Angel a.k.a. Susie

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Declaration

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Introduction

Secret Struggles



Well, hello there, friend! Oh, you don't know we're friends yet? Ah, well this is awkward. Let me explain...

When you picked up this book, you automatically became friends with me. Whether you wanted to be or not, we're here now, so don't even think about trying to exchange it. Just bring your book close to your heart and let me love you, okay? Cool!

We're going to get real personal all up and throughout this book. I'm talking TMI personal! There'll be some laughs, some tears, and probably some moments where you might not like me very much. That's okay; friendships have their ups and downs. Just know that if I step on your toes with hard-hitting truths, the Holy Spirit stubbed my pinky toe and pulled my card first.

Like any good relationship, friendships require honesty, vulnerability, and accountability. When you think about your closest friends, hopefully they are people who you can have honest conversations with about the real issues you encounter in life. They should be people who don't condemn you but who love you back to Christ and point you in the right direction when you get sidetracked. Sometimes their pointing may feel more like a push or a drag, but it's usually with good intentions; they want what is best for you...And that's where I come in, friend!

Throughout the remaining chapters, we are going to have quite a few honest conversations about real issues that impact our lives, whether we want to acknowledge them or not. We're going to discuss different areas in our hearts that need fixing, and we will address instances in which we need a full-on transplant. I say *we* because I'm in this with you! I'm getting gut-punched with correction and conviction too, so know that you're not alone.

My hope is that as you read through each chapter, you will find a safe place to examine secret struggles in your life. I'll be honest—this likely is not going to *feel* good, but I promise it will work out for your good. How so, you ask? Well, as you start to experience freedom from bondage, past hurts, guilt, and shame, it's likely that dormant issues may rise to the surface. There may be old

wounds that you thought you had dealt with already, when in reality, you only covered them instead of allowing them to be healed.

Quite frankly, there will be times that you may not want to deal with your stuff because it will bring up memories and emotions that you aren't ready to handle. It'll be easier to close the chapter than to think about why you do or don't do certain things; keep in mind what is on the other side of you addressing it—your freedom. All I ask is that you have an open heart for the Lord to reveal whatever He desires to reveal to you throughout these pages.

So, what exactly are secret struggles? They are the hidden issues in your life. I say *hidden* because they're usually the areas that you struggle with that no one else knows about. They're the things that you go through in silence as you put on face for church, work, family, friends, and whoever else that you don't want to know what is *really* going on with you. In some instances, your secret struggle may be a sin, such as fornication or coveting, while in others, your struggle may be with fear or depression.

Although the chapters covered are not an exclusive list of all possible secret struggles, I hope that you will be able to use what you learn throughout this book and apply it to those areas that are not listed. One of the

things that you will constantly see me talk about that can be applied to any topic not covered, is the importance of identifying the root of the issue. I want to encourage you to take the time to really think about this. It's easy to dismiss actions or behaviors without actually looking at the *whys* behind them. Not on my watch, girlfriend! Don't choose to ignore problems just because yours aren't covered specifically in this book.

The purpose of this book is not to make you feel bad about your issues. Trust me when I say that we all have something that we are struggling with. I have struggled with every single topic covered within this book. Truth be told, I'm currently struggling with a handful of the topics. I'm not here to point out your problems and make myself out to be the one who has it all figured out. That's the furthest from the truth!

My goal is to point you to Christ and to let you know that there's no reason to remain bound when we serve a God who has the power and authority to set us free and make us whole. He desires for us to walk in freedom, yet somewhere along the way, we've allowed life to convince us to settle with being sort-of, kind-of, free.

We'll listen to sermons, attend conferences, and cry during an altar call, but still remain bound. We'll lead, serve, and tell others about Jesus as we continue to be enslaved to bondage. What good is it to find ourselves in

church, saved, leading women's groups, and singing on the praise and worship team yet never fully experiencing the freedom that is available through Christ?

I don't know about you, but I refuse to allow bondage to become my norm just because it has been my experience. I won't sit back and allow dysfunction or sin to become comfortable in my life simply because it's what I've grown accustomed to. I won't accept cycles of brokenness or past mistakes to dictate my ability to be free when freedom is readily available to me through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17; John 8:36; Romans 8:1-2; Galatians 5:1).

My prayer is that as you identify the secret struggles within your life, you will be able to fully surrender them to God. I am standing in agreement with you for whatever you are believing Him for as you flip through the remaining pages. I declare that chains, strongholds, and generational curses will be broken as you walk in freedom. I'm believing with you that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead will move through your heart to heal, set free, and deliver in Jesus' name.

Chapter 1

Unfulfilled Purpose

Oh Yeah, I Am Supposed to do That



One of the burning questions we all have at some point in life is, “What is my purpose? What *exactly* am I on this earth for?” Maybe God has already revealed it to you, but you aren’t in the season to see it fulfilled yet. Perhaps you’re still figuring out exactly what it is and that’s perfectly okay, too!

Whether you’re walking in purpose now or in the very beginning stages of discovering it, know that we all have a universal purpose in common. When we accept the identity of a believer, we also accept an assignment that sadly a lot of us secretly struggle with fulfilling. No, I’m not referring to loving others, although there are some special kind of people who like to make that

commandment extra challenging on certain days...like Mondays.

I digress.

The universal purpose we all have is to fulfill the great commission.



Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19).



I don't want to assume that just because you are reading this book that you know what salvation is or why we need it. Listen, I was in church for years and I didn't realize the significance of Jesus dying until I was in my early 20s.

To fully understand the importance of fulfilling the great commission, we must first understand what exactly the great commission *is*. The great commission is the charge to share the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ. In other words, we are to tell people of how God sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins and redeem mankind back to Him (John 3:15-18).

Now ask yourself this question without any judgment attached to it: Do you feel confident that you would be able to effectively articulate to someone why they need salvation? If the answer is *yes*, then awesome sauce! If the answer is *no*, my goal is to provide you with the answers, supported by scripture, to fully equip you with

the knowledge necessary for you to be confident to lead someone to salvation.

Alright, let's break it down!

The Fall

Before we can fully comprehend the importance of salvation, we must first know why we need a Savior. To best understand this, we must tackle this subject from the beginning. When you study the book of Genesis, you will learn that God created man in His own image, starting with Adam (Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:7). After he was formed, Adam's purpose was to tend to and watch over the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). Within the garden, God placed the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:9). He told Adam, "You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die" (Genesis 2:16-17).

Now fast-forward to Eve. After God formed her out of Adam's rib, we find her having a conversation with a serpent in the garden (Genesis 3:1-5). Take into consideration that prior to the fall, snakes did not have a negative reputation as they do with us now, so Eve didn't have a reason to be afraid or cautious when she encountered it (Genesis 3:14-15).

From the context of the scripture, we can assume that Satan disguised himself as the serpent. After talking

with Eve, he convinced her to eat the fruit that God instructed Adam not to (Genesis 3:1-7). She then gave the fruit to her husband, who I just want to point out, “was with her” (Genesis 3:6).

This is why it is so important to have a man who truly takes heed and obeys what God instructed *him* to do. You better make sure that the man you marry loves and listens to God more than He does to you. As his wife, you could unintentionally be a hindrance to him by giving him something or saying something, that appears to be good when it’s really deception wrapped in an appealing package.

Notice that sin didn’t enter the world until Adam ate the fruit—not Eve. Even though she knew she wasn’t supposed to eat the fruit either, the instruction by God was given to Adam. I’m just going to leave that little tidbit there to marinate.

After they ate the fruit, Adam and Eve realized they were naked. Then, they attempted to hide themselves from God (Genesis 3:7-10). Due to their disobedience, God told Eve, “I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you” (Genesis 3:16). This gives us insight as to why wives are to submit to their husbands, as it established order after the fall.

I'm not even going to address the fact that this is the culprit of women having to endure excruciating labor pains. I'm just going to insert a sarcastic "thanks sis" as we collectively side eye Eve.

Oh, but don't you worry. Adam had his own set of consequences. God told him:

The ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat until you return to the ground from which you were made (Genesis 3:17-19).

From there, Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23-24). I know you might be thinking, "Jeez that seems so harsh! What a mean God," but just follow me for a minute.

When Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden, it was similar to being in heaven. It was perfect; there was no sin, and they walked freely with the Lord. If they would have remained in the garden after they disobeyed God, and continued to eat from the tree of life, they would have lived forever (Genesis 3:22). The problem with this is that they wouldn't have had eternal life in the perfect state that they did prior to the fall. Instead, they would have lived in an eternal state of sin.

Remember what their response was after they disobeyed God? They hid themselves. So, imagine being in a constant state of hiding from God because of the shame attached to sin. That was never the type of relationship that God wanted to have with His people. He created us to be in fellowship with Him, but sin resulted in us being separated from Him. Therefore, measures had to be put in place in an attempt to reconcile people back to God.

After the Fall

After sin entered the world, people would offer a sacrifice, known as a burnt offering, to the Lord to make atonement, or amends, for their sins. The burnt offering had to be a male animal without any imperfections and it was slaughtered on an altar that was dedicated to the Lord (Leviticus 1:1-17). The significance of this is that Romans 6:23 tells us that the payment for sin is death. Therefore, prior to Jesus' death and resurrection, the sacrifice of the dead animal acted as a substitute for the punishment that a person otherwise should have received for their sin (Leviticus 1:4).

In addition to this, people also had to depend on a third party to atone for their sins. This was done through the Jewish Custom called the Day of Atonement. It was designated as a day for the mourning and repentance of Israel's sins and it took place once per year. At this time,

the high priest would go to the temple to make amends for the sins of the nation (Exodus 30:10; Leviticus 16:1-34; Hebrews 9:7). Within the temple of Jerusalem, there were the courts and two sacred rooms known as the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, which were both separated by a veil (Exodus 26:33).

In the Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant. It was made of acacia wood and it was covered, both inside and out, with pure gold (Exodus 25:10-11). Inside of the Ark were the Ten Commandments, and there was a special cover over it called the Mercy Seat (Exodus 25:17). This was known as the atonement cover, and it was where the Lord's presence rested (Exodus 25:21-22). The high priest was the only one who could enter the Most Holy Place and he was only allowed to do so once a year. To say that sin changed the relationship status with God to "it's complicated," would have been an understatement.

Jesus Redeems the World

No matter how many burnt offerings were presented to God, there was never a sacrifice pure enough to reconcile people back to their rightful position with Him (Hebrew 10:1-18). God the Father sent His Son, Jesus, to the earth in the womb of the virgin Mary, to redeem mankind once and for all (Matthew 1:18-25). Jesus was the perfect sacrifice because He had no sin, yet He died

for the sins of people (2 Corinthians 5:21). He paid the debt in full that we could've never paid ourselves. Not only that, God sent Him to pay this debt for us, while we were yet still sinners (Romans 5:8).



But He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed (Isaiah 53:5).



Before He was nailed to the cross, He was beaten, whipped, taunted, and a crown of thorns was placed on His head (Matthew 27:15-44; Mark 15:6-20; Luke: 13-43; John 19:1-27). Once Jesus died, the veil in the temple was completely torn, which symbolized that people would now have access to God through the sacrifice of Christ (Matthew 27:51). They no longer had to present a burnt offering or have the high priest make amends for them, because Jesus was the perfect sacrifice that reconciled all of mankind back to the Father.

Now don't get it twisted. The fact that Jesus died was necessary, but it's not the only important factor. It's also the fact that He defeated death when God raised Him from the dead, three days later that truly sealed the deal (Matthew 28:1-20). When He rose from the grave, it showed God's divine power and affirmed that Jesus truly was the Son of God. It also validated His claim that He would be resurrected three days later (Mark 8:31; Mark 9:31, Mark 10:34; John 2:19).

We can believe by faith that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to us through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11). As a result of this, we have the guarantee that those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God will be resurrected when He returns and spend eternity with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 13-18; John 11:25-26; Romans 6:5-11; 1 Corinthians 15: 21-23).

I gave you this in-depth background information to make sure that you have a clear understanding of the gospel. Keep in mind, however, that when you're talking to someone who you either don't have much time with or who doesn't know much about the Bible, there is a such thing as information overload. Simply give them the basics.

Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden of Eden after they disobeyed God and caused sin to enter the world. Because of this, people were separated from God and they attempted to make atonement for their sins by offering burnt sacrifices to Him. The issue with this was that the blood that was sacrificed was never pure enough to reconcile people back with God. Therefore, He sent His Son, Jesus, as the perfect sacrifice to die for the sins of man and to redeem us back to God. After He died, God raised Jesus from the dead three days later. The importance of this is that we won't die in our sin and face

eternal damnation, but instead we have everlasting life in heaven with the Lord. Likewise, we're able to presently live in freedom and abundance as we trust by faith the return of Jesus Christ.

Boom!

Now that we have the basics covered, let's talk about, well...why we don't talk about it! For every action, or lack thereof, there's always a root attached to it. Until you identify the root of where your actions stem from, you'll only scratch the surface of the issue but you'll never actually resolve it for good. That being said, many people fail to share the gospel. Rather than simply encouraging people to share it, we must first identify the root issue from which this common lack of action stems from. Let's discuss a few reasons why believers struggle with sharing the Good News with others!

1. They don't know how to effectively witness, or they don't feel comfortable witnessing.

Is it just me, or does it seem like our voice goes up an octave or five when we start talking to someone about Jesus? We can be having a normal conversation, but when the topic shifts to religion, something just changes in our posture, tone, demeanor, eyebrows, and everything. We get nervous and our focus shifts from leading a person to Christ to wondering if we're saying the rights things. You never want to miss the opportunity

to lead someone to Christ because you feel like you don't know how to. So, we're going to go ahead and get rid of that excuse today!

If a person asks you what they need to do to be saved, you should be able to lead them to Romans 10:9-10:

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.

That Biblical promise is a great place to start. Now obviously, there are many more things that you can discuss, such as repentance and baptism, but keep in mind that you don't want to overload a person with information. When people get overwhelmed, they tend to shut down and think that it's too much. Give them the basics and try to get them plugged into a solid, Bible-teaching church where they can be taught the Word of God.

Notice I suggested talking to them about church *after* you talk to them about salvation. Oftentimes people confuse inviting a person to church with making disciples and winning souls for Christ. Understand that although they are both important, they are not exclusively the same. You can invite a person to church who will never

go on to get saved or even hear about salvation. In contrast, if you talk to a person about salvation and lead them to Christ, they're more likely to get plugged into a church as a result of accepting salvation.

Peter gives us a great example of this in Acts chapter 2 when he witnesses to a large group of people on the day of Pentecost, a traditional Jewish festival. After a group of believers were filled with the Holy Spirit, they began speaking in each other's languages. A crowd of people overheard them and accused them of being drunk (Acts 2:1-13). Peter approached the crowd and he began sharing the gospel with them. If you read the remainder of chapter 2, there are three key factors that you can take away from this example of witnessing:

- Peter acknowledged that Jesus died and that God raised Him from the dead (Acts 2:32).
- He told the crowd that Jesus is the Messiah (Acts 2:36).
- He instructed them to repent of their sins, turn to God, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

We then learn that, “those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all” (Acts 2:41). They were added to the church *after* Peter talked to them about who Jesus was,

repentance, and the Holy Spirit. He didn't simply invite them to church and hope they'd figure it out there.

Finally, follow-up is so important! If you can keep in touch with the person, do so. Don't assume that just because they gave their life to Christ, they will stay in the faith. I don't know about you, but when I first got saved it was HARD. After being saved for the last eight years, guess what? It is still very hard sometimes!

Don't hesitate to ask people how they are genuinely doing. People backslide more often than you may think. Life happens, and people's faith begins to waver. Don't assume that they're fine; actually check in and follow up. It's always great to have encouragement, support, and accountability in this walk, so if you're able to offer it, then do so.

2. They fear that they don't know enough to answer a person's questions.

It's perfectly okay to say that you don't know something! I don't know why we have an inner inkling that tries to convince us that we should have an answer for everything. It is better for you to say that you don't know than to give someone an answer that doesn't line up with scripture or that leads a person away from God. If you don't know, say you don't know! That's a great opportunity to invite them to a Bible study or to reconnect with them after you study the topic in the Bible.

With that being said, as a believer, there are a few basics that you must know. You have to know Romans 10:9. Just like you have to have Polynesian sauce when you order from Chick-fil-a, you also have to know Romans 10:9. You should be able to confidently lead someone to salvation as a believer. Why is this important? What if someone wants to accept salvation and your pastor isn't around? There's no one there but you and that person, and the next service at church that you want to invite them to is five days away. What if they don't want to go to church but they want to accept salvation in that moment? What are you going to do? God forbid you wait for someone else to lead them to Christ and that person dies in their sin. I know this may seem like an extreme example, but it's a reality.

We should be able to lead people to salvation and effectively communicate to them why it is necessary. Consider what thoughts would go through your mind if someone told you that you needed to be saved but when you asked them why, their response was, "I don't know, that's what my momma said," or "Christian's just be doing stuff." If you don't know what you believe in or why you believe in it, how can you expect someone else to be receptive to it?

I cannot stress enough how important it is to understand the basics of salvation as a believer. Are all

components of the Bible important and necessary as well? Absolutely! But in the grand scheme of things, the specifics on whether the fruit that Adam and Eve ate was an apple, blueberry, or watermelon, are irrelevant in comparison to salvation.

I must also add that it's important to study the Bible for yourself. Don't just accept what people quote or say about the Bible simply because they speak eloquently or have a title. Study the scriptures for yourself and allow the Bible to be your source.

Not what you think.

Not how you feel on Sundays.

Not your momma or auntie's traditions.

Not a devotional or a great sermon you listened to.

Not simply what you've heard your pastor say.

Allow the Bible to be your foundation. As you get an understanding of the basics of salvation, continue to seek God for wisdom in other areas of His word. James 1:5 tells us, "if you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and He will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking."

Furthermore, seek the Lord for discernment so that you're able to understand the type of person you are dealing with. A lot of times, people get nervous to witness to others because they're afraid that the person will start a debate with them and they won't know what to say. Understand that there are people who are sincere

inquirers. They are the people who ask questions because they genuinely want to know. They're not trying to set you up for the okey-doke. On the other hand, you have people who want to debate, and they will ask you questions with a rebuttal already in mind. They want to pick apart what you believe in and they want to confuse you. Allow God to give you wisdom to discern the difference between the two, and respond accordingly.

If it brings you any comfort, know that there is not one person who knows absolutely everything about the Bible. The truth is, you can read the Bible from cover to cover and still not fully know or understand everything in it. It's possible to have knowledge of a topic, yet still lack wisdom in it. We should always remain teachable and in a position for God to continue to reveal new things to us through His Word. Don't allow an insecurity of not knowing enough to keep you from winning souls for Christ; none of us have it all figured out!

Even as I wrote this, there was a part of me that questioned if I was articulating it correctly.

Did I leave something out?

Would someone read this and disagree?

The truth is, I am an overthinker and one of my biggest frustrations is being misunderstood.

I've come to realize, and I still have to remind myself at times, that the Word of God will always speak for itself.

People can try to debate with you and twist and turn it to make it fit what they want it to, but at the end of the day, their personal beliefs do not change the Word of God.

3. They don't think it's their responsibility.

Lastly, some, if not many, believers think that leading people to Christ is solely the duty of their pastor and other leaders in the church. That's a lie from the pits of hell. Sharing the gospel is a charge to all who identify themselves as believers. Your pastor and other leadership, likely aren't at your job, around your family and friends, or the people who you encounter on a daily basis. God has placed *you* in your environment for you to reach and share the Good News with the people around you. Those people are assigned to you—not your pastor. Just because you invited your friend's, cousins, sister, to church with you, that doesn't put the responsibility on your pastor to lead them to salvation. It could very well be for you to lead them but instead of walking them through salvation, you just keep inviting them to church.

Consider this—when is the last time you heard a sermon strictly on salvation? If recently, that's great, and if not, that doesn't necessarily mean that your church isn't teaching sound doctrine. The reason I bring this up is because the first time a person hears the message of salvation, regarding what it is, why it's significant, and why they need to be saved, will likely not be during a

Sunday service. Do churches have a call for salvation at the end of their sermons? Yeah, many do. But opening the altar for someone to accept salvation is typically a brief moment where Romans 10:9 is quoted and then people praise or shout over their new brother or sister in Christ.

Then what?

They confessed with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead three days later, but do they know *why* He had to die? Do they understand the significance of God raising Jesus from the dead?

I know that there are new member classes, pamphlets, and all that great stuff, but keep in mind that those are resources that usually only reach the people who make it to a church and who choose to continue to attend. Therefore, it's important as a believer to be proactive in the environment that we've been placed in to win souls for Christ.

Obviously, this is not an all-inclusive list; it's simply a starting point. A starting point to get you thinking and to start a conversation. Just because your "why" wasn't listed, that doesn't mean it doesn't exist. If you profess to be a believer but you don't talk to anyone about salvation, identify *why* you've failed to do so. This isn't to attack you or to make you feel like a *bad* follower of Christ. I simply want you to consider this because there's so much work

to do for the kingdom of God. Whether you believe it or not, you play an instrumental role in that work being completed.

I'm reminded of when Jesus went throughout the synagogues teaching and performing miracles. As He saw the crowds of people, He had compassion for them as they were "like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:35-36). He turned to His disciples and said, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So, pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields" (Matthew 37-38).

This word also applies to us today. There are people who want to know Jesus and who want to have a relationship with Him, but they're waiting for someone to show them the way. The need is present, but the workers are few. The desire is present, but the believers who are capable and willing to share the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ are few. Are you willing to share Jesus with others or are you waiting for one of the few to step in and do what you're equipped to do? God needs you to be present and proactive in the field that He has placed you in because there are people within your reach who still need the Good News.

As I'm sharing this message with you, I'm also giving the same charge to myself. We can't remain comfortable with attending church, small groups, Bible studies, and

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immersing ourselves in Christian community yet completely avoiding the very heartbeat of Christ, which is making disciples.

Challenge: Have a conversation with at least one person this week about the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Chapter 2

Inadequacy

God, You Chose Wrong



Have you ever felt like God dialed the wrong number when He called you to fulfill a vision that seemed so farfetched? Maybe you tried to ignore it, but then you went up for an altar call and the prophet read your entire journal and confirmed what you were running from. It's as if you look at the calling on your life like it's a bill collector or someone you regret giving your number to.

You know what I'm talking about!

I mean that person who calls you all the time and you sit, phone in hand, as you watch it ring. That's how we tend to avoid God's call on our lives.

Let's be honest, occasionally the reason for this is laziness. Other times, however, it's because we feel

inadequate to fulfill the very thing that God has purposed us for. You would be surprised by how many people attend church, read their Bibles, and have a relationship with God, yet struggle to feel adequate. They've been told that God has amazing plans for their life, they're purposed for this or that, and God has even given them a vision of the ways He intends to use them. However, it all gets shut down though by feelings of inadequacy.

I know that struggle all too well. I can't tell you how many times I've laid on my floor with the ugly cry face, looking like a scene out of a very dramatic Lifetime movie. There have been too many moments to count where I told God through incoherent tears that I didn't feel cut out for what He's called me to. I wish I could say that it was a one-time, wham-bam, thank you ma'am ordeal where I gave myself a super spiritual pep talk that got me together, but that's not the case.

There are days where I feel confident and excited to take on what God has called me to, and then there are days where I say, "God, You chose wrong with this one." I've told Him countless times that He could've chosen someone who was more disciplined, consistent, and faithful to do what He's called me to. He's shown me every time that yes, He *could* have, but He chose me. He's still very confident in His choice.

Do you know that God is confident in His choice in you, even when you are not?

It's easy to feel insecure, overwhelmed, and unworthy to accept what God has called you to. Truth be told, some of us wouldn't even choose ourselves for what God has chosen us for. We would respond just as Moses did and offer suggestions for other people who are way more cut out for the task (Exodus 4:13). Isn't it amazing how when God reveals someone else's purpose, we can be so supportive and encouraging to them, but when it comes to our purpose, we tend to start ragging on ourselves?

We will prepare an entire essay, accompanied by a PowerPoint slide with exhibits A through F as to why we are not the one for the assignment at hand. We'll tell God that our age hinders us, we don't know enough, we're not articulate, we're better in the background, we didn't come from a "religious" family, and the list goes on and on...and on. I can imagine God thinking, "Okay, are you finished? Because there's work to be done." Matter of fact, let's look at God's response to a few of our brother's rebuttals when He told them the plans He had for them.

When God informed our little brother Jeremiah that He set him apart to be a prophet to the nations, Jeremiah's immediate response was, "I can't speak for You, I'm too young!" (Jeremiah 1:5-6). Now I know it may be very tempting to roll your eyes at Jeremiah's response,

but how many times have you heard someone say that they'll serve God when they're older? Perhaps even *you* said it yourself.

Some people feel inadequate because they don't believe they are mature enough or they worry that they won't be well-received because of their age. Then there's the other side where people who have gracefully aged feel as though they've missed their opportunity because they're older now.

Here's a reality check, none of those fears or concerns negate what God has called you to. He wasn't intimidated by these factors when He selected you according to His purpose. He doesn't look at it to be an issue because His focus is on a heart that is willing to obey and surrender to His instruction. God told Jeremiah to go where He led him and speak whatever He told him to (Jeremiah 1:7). He then promised that He would give him the words to speak and that He didn't have to be afraid of what people might say or do to him, because He would be with Jeremiah and He would protect him (Jeremiah 1:8-10).

Now, let's talk about brother Gideon. We meet Gideon in Judges 6, after we learn that the Israelites were being oppressed by the Midianites for seven years due to their disobedience (Judges 6:1-6). An angel appeared to Gideon and told him that the Lord was with him (Judges 6:12). Now Gideon's response was very much like ours

when we are faced with all kinds of different tests and trials. He looks at the angel and says:

If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? And where are all the miracles our ancestors told us about? Didn't they say the Lord brought us up out of Egypt? But now the Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to the Midianites (Judges 6:12-13).

Is it just me or do you sense the sass in Gideon's voice too?

I love that in the next verse, it is the Lord, not the angel, who tells Gideon, "Go with the strength you have and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I am sending you" (Judges 6:14). Gideon's tone changed when he realized that he would be the appointed one to change the condition of the Israelites. He responds with, "But Lord, how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in the whole tribe of Manasseh, and I am the least in my entire family" (Judges 6:15).

Did you catch the irony?

God told Gideon to go with the strength that he already had, but Gideon focused on the weakness that he perceived he had. God knew that Gideon could handle the task He had given him because God had already provided Gideon with the strength to do it.

Inadequacy

I can imagine that Gideon probably didn't feel strong because of the circumstances surrounding him and the Israelites. In the same way, in your life, feelings of inadequacy may sink in as you look at your brokenness and what is falling apart in your life, which convinces you that God has left you. You don't feel like He can use you because your life is in shambles. You don't have any strength left to push forward because you feel beat down and defeated. It's easy to be consumed by inadequacy when you focus on your limitations versus God's strength. You won't know what strength you possess in the Lord until you start exercising it.

Finally, let's look at someone who made multiple attempts to get out of what God called him to. If you guessed Mr. Moses, then you are right!

When God first told Moses that He would use him to deliver the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt, Moses protested, "Who am I?" (Exodus 3:11) He protested to God! That means he was openly objecting and showing disapproval of what God had instructed him to do. That's pretty gutsy Mo Mo. Despite this, God tells Moses that He will be with him and even gives him a sign that He is the one who sent him (Exodus 3:12).

Moses still tries to find a way to get out of being obedient by telling God that the people would question

who sent him. But God says, tell them “I Am Who I Am” (Exodus 3:13-14).

Whelp, there you have it!

Moses wasn't done though; he gives another rebuttal as he tells God that he doesn't think that the people will believe him or listen to him (Exodus 4:1). God tells Moses to take his staff and throw it on the ground, and it turned into a snake. When he grabbed the tail of the snake, it turned back into his staff. God informed Moses that this would be the sign that He had appeared to him, and that God was the one who sent him (Exodus 4:2-5).

Moses still wasn't ready to let up. He goes on to tell God that he's not an articulate man, therefore he clearly wouldn't make a great mouthpiece for Him (Exodus 4:10).

I just want to point out that for someone who swore they weren't good with words, he sure did put in a lot of work attempting to talk himself out of what God told him to do.

Nonetheless, God told Moses that He is who created the mouth and that He would be with him and tell him what to say (Exodus 4:11-12). Moses makes one more attempt to get out of his assignment, but this time he doesn't even give an excuse, he just says, “Lord, please! Send anyone else” (Exodus 4:13). My inner introverted self connects with the desperation in his plea.

I feel you, Moses. I get it.

But God wasn't having it. Although He allowed Moses' brother, Aaron, to speak to the people for him, God still required Moses to do what He had called him to.

Maybe you feel inadequate like Moses because you're anticipating issues that you think you will run into. Or maybe you're afraid to do it by yourself. You don't feel like you'll be able to handle such a task; in focusing on that, you miss all the resources that God has equipped you with. As you're worried about things that may never even happen, you forget that He's not calling you to an assignment for you to do it alone or figure it out by yourself.

In case you missed it, let me point out the one common denominator between all three of these men. God called them and He told them that He would be with them. He says this as He reaffirms the assignment He has called them to. Notice, He never tells any of them, "when you get yourself together, then I'll be with you and use you." If that were the case, then no one would ever get anything done, yet alone even start! He doesn't need us to be self-assured or self-reliant to complete the job. He simply needs us to be confident in who He is and who we are in Him.

Every time you place your confidence in what you feel you're capable of handling, you'll end up missing out on fully seeing God's glory revealed in your life. At some

point, you will realize that what you feel is not always indicative of who you are or your capabilities in God. When you learn to remove feelings out of the picture, you'll quickly see that you don't always have to *feel* called to be called. You don't always have to look the part to be set apart for the purpose that God has called you to.

You may not realize this, but trust and believe that Satan does. He will use your feelings of inadequacy to attack your confidence because there is true freedom and power that comes with walking boldly in who God created you to be. If the enemy can plant seeds in your mind to sift your confidence, he knows that it won't just affect you, but it will also have an impact on the people who God has assigned to you—those who you will ultimately end up missing by not being in your rightful position.

When we find ourselves feeling inadequate, we should ask, "What is the root of it?" What is the underlying reason behind why we feel that we are not sufficient to fulfill the very promise that God has on our lives? Sometimes the issue is a result of us trying to obtain a level of perfection in our own strength when we will never be able to do what God has appointed us to without completely relying on Him. In 2 Corinthians 12:9, Apostle Paul speaks directly to this as he talks about the thorn in his flesh that he prayed for God to remove.

Although Paul was an anointed man of God, he had an infirmity, his thorn, that he could not get rid of. He had a very close relationship with the Lord and he was very knowledgeable of the Word of God, yet he had this issue that he could not shake. Paul asked God three times to remove it and His response was, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (KJV).

Is it just me, or do you feel your help coming on, too?

A component of struggling with inadequacy is feeling insufficient. Do you realize that where you feel insufficient, God says, *My grace is sufficient?* Where you feel you are lacking something that is essential to you being perfect or fit to fulfill the assignment that He has given to you, He says, *My strength is made perfect in weakness.* He’s telling you that where you lack, He resides.

Where you are full, He is sufficient.

Where you lack, He is sufficient.

Where you have abundance, He is *still* sufficient.

I need you to catch this!

God is enough; you don’t have to worry about being good enough, you simply just have to *be*. Be who He created you to be. Be who He has called you to be. Be who He already predestined you to be. By you simply being, you are adequately equipped for your purpose.

The real question is, do you know who you are in Him and what He's called you to? Some people find it difficult to walk in who God has called them to be because they have a mistaken identity. They end up mistaking what other people labeled them as to be their true identity when it's not even close to who God created them to be. They conformed to their parent's, teacher's, friend's, supervisor's, and whoever else's version of them.

Since so and so said they would never amount to anything, they didn't have the skill, they weren't smart enough, pretty enough, or good enough, many people believe those words. They take on the identity of being the shy, quiet, passive one because that's what everyone labeled them as. Many begin to believe that there's no way they could be a mouthpiece for God. There's no way that they could stand before people and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. According to the identity that they have been walking in, they don't fit the criteria or look the part.

That's how I've been viewed—too quiet, too timid, too young, and too whatever else to be in the position that I'm in. That was what I believed, too, for a moment. I was always the little quiet one in the background. I struggled with figuring out what it meant and looked like to be a woman in ministry. I didn't fit the mold and therefore I felt very unsure of what God called me to. I didn't *look*

like a minister. I loved a good red lip and I still do. I got way too many tattoos before I was saved and I can't always cover them. I'm not down for wearing stockings in the heat of the summer. It's just not going to happen. But I love Jesus with all my heart. I want to fulfill God's will for my life and I'm so thankful that He doesn't choose us based on people's narrow perceptions of what they assume we are or are not capable of.

When feelings of inadequacy attempt to creep into your mind, you have to speak life. Remind yourself of who you are in God and what His Word says about you. If you need to write it out, write it down in a journal or on sticky notes and place it somewhere that it is visible. If you want to look in the mirror and remind yourself that you are called and chosen when you don't feel so, do it. If you must stand, or kneel, with arms stretched and say, "I am the head and not the tail," say it (Deuteronomy 28:13).

Speak it boldly!

"I am who God says that I am. I am gifted, anointed, and called for such a time as this. I will fulfill the will of God in my life and I believe that He will supply all my needs according to His riches and glory (Philippians 4:19). I am chosen, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God's very own possession (1 Peter 2:9). I will bear good fruit for the kingdom of God and I will walk in purpose, and on purpose. I am a child of God. Because of that I

have purpose and no devil in hell will keep me from fulfilling it. I am God's masterpiece, created to perform good works and it shall be fulfilled" (Ephesians 2:10).

Repeat it as often as you need to.

Declare it.

Decree it.

Believe it.

