



THE

POIEMA

PROJECT

50 DAYS TO YOUR
TRUE IDENTITY

A 50-day devotional

OUR POIEMA PROJECT PRAYER

Father God,

You are our creator, our master-artist, the potter who shapes my heart to be like Jesus. I'm coming to you now, not as a stranger, but as your child, chosen and cherished. I am your masterpiece. You are shaping me like Jesus, so I can make a difference in the world.

That's what you do and that's who I am.

Father, when the noise creeps in and the world tries to define us, remind us that our identity is secure in You. I am not what others say about me. I am not what my past declares about me. I am not what my fears whisper. I am who YOU say I am. Give me the courage to walk in the identity you've given me. I choose to see myself through your eyes, in Christ. I am not an accident or an afterthought. I am redeemed and restored by your grace. You are shaping me like Jesus, so I can make a difference in the world.

That's what you do and that's who I am.

In moments of weakness, help us remember that your strength lives in us, your Spirit empowers us. I am intentionally created, deeply loved, and purposefully placed in this time and season. You waste nothing. In every challenge, every hardship, every blessing your hand is writing my story, shaping my calling. I am your masterpiece. You are shaping me like Jesus, so I can do a good work.

That's what you do and that's who I am.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Thanks for joining us for the Poiema Project. The next 50 days are all about asking the question, “Who am I?” In the gallery of life, where influencers clamor and images flash, a profound truth often gets lost in the noise: you are God’s masterpiece. You are crafted by the hand of God, for the purpose of doing something good in the world. In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul captures this beautiful reality with the word *poiema*. In Ephesians 2:10, Paul writes,

*For we are God’s masterpiece (poiema).
He has created us anew in Christ Jesus,
so we can do the good things
he planned for us long ago.*

During the next 50 days, we’ll uncover the layers of our God-given identity, peeling back the false narratives and uncovering the true story of who we are in Christ. It’s not just content; we’ll offer spiritual practices to help us dive into our identity, like a digital fast and a deep dive into our story with a post-it-note timeline. We’ll follow a listen, learn and lean model. Each day, you’ll listen to scripture, learn from the devotional, and lean in with your response. Here’s how I will use this daily journal:

1. I’ll start by reading Ephesians 2:10 (above) and then praying the Poiema Project Prayer.
2. Then it’s on to the daily devotional.
3. Finally, every day I’ll do my truth rehearsal, reading the “Who am I” statements on the last page of the journal.
4. Don’t miss the digital fast and the post-it-note timeline practices. They are gold!

So come as you are, masterpiece and mess, broken and beloved, confused and cherished. When we truly grasp who we are in Christ, it changes everything!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Dan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, sweeping 'D' at the beginning.

WEEK ONE WHO AM I?

That's the question we are asking for the next 50 days. Who do you think you are? We often find ourselves asking questions like, "Why am I here?" or "What is my purpose? But identity comes before destiny. The answer to "Why am I here?" is shaped by the answer to "Who am I?" We talk about self-image and the holy grail of self-esteem, but those are surface words. For the next 50 days, we're going deeper to our identity.

Here at the start of our journey, let me encourage you to daily make a statement and ask a question. The statement is an "I will..." statement. It's what you are going to do. It's not enough to listen and learn, we have to lean in or nothing will change. Before you leave a day, having pondered a scripture, prayed a prayer (or two) and read a devotional, write out an "I will" statement and then answer the question, "With whom can I share what I'm learning and what God is doing?"

During this first week, we are focusing on who we are without Christ, who the world wants us to be, and who we are because of God's shaping work. Some of us have spent long seasons of our lives trying to be someone we aren't, often afraid of finding out who we really are. But here's the truth: you are God's poiema project, and He does such good work!

So during this week as you begin to ponder your true identity,

- Make a gratitude list. Looking for God at work will help you see Him as the master-artist!
- Read the "Who Am I" list daily.
- And if you would like to dive deeper into your identity, visit calvarysc.org/resources. **Consider participating in Leadership Advance! More information and registration can be found at calvarysc.org/leadershipadvance**

LISTEN

1 Peter 2:9

LEARN

As a kid growing up, something that I would hear my mother say every morning as she dropped me and my brother off at school was, “Boys — you’re leaders, not followers. Lead well today.” Most days this was likely out of sheer desperation that I/we would not succumb to the questionable influence of some of our peers, but nonetheless, the principle stands to this day. Every single day I need a reminder of “who” I am, so that I know what to “do.”

In other words, the “who” always comes before the “do.”

This is what I love about following Jesus. So often in the Scriptures, God is found reminding us who we are before He ever tells us what to do.

So who are you? Peter’s words in his letter to a very diverse group of new Christians was:

1. We are “chosen.” Just let that sink in. The Creator of the universe has personally selected you. This isn’t a random choice or a last-minute decision. God has purposefully and lovingly chosen you to be His own.
2. We’re described as a “royal priesthood” and a “holy nation.” In ancient times, priests were set apart to serve God and mediate between Him and the people. Now we have direct access to God and the privilege of representing Him to the world.
3. We are God’s “special possession.” Like a treasured keepsake or a priceless heirloom, we are deeply valued by our Heavenly Father.

Why has God given us this remarkable identity? The verse tells us: to “declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.” Our identity isn’t just for our own benefit — it’s a calling to share the transformative power of God’s love with others — blessed to be a blessing.

Remember, you were once in darkness, but God has brought you into His marvelous light. Your life is a testament to His grace and power.

LEAN

Take a moment today (preferably in the morning) and say this out loud;

- “I am chosen by God.”
- “I am part of a royal priesthood.”
- “I belong to a holy nation.”
- “I am God’s special possession.”
- “I have been called out of darkness into God’s wonderful light.”

At the end of your day take a moment to reflect on how remembering your identity in Christ influenced your actions, behaviors, thoughts about yourself, etc.

PRAY

Lord, thank You for choosing me and giving me such a precious identity in You. Help me to live in a way that reflects this calling, and give me opportunities to declare Your praises to those around me. May my life be a beacon of Your wonderful light in this world. Amen.

Isaac Balban

LISTEN

1 Corinthians 6:17; Galatians 5:16-25

LEARN

“But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”

1 Corinthians 6:17. Personally I don't think this verse gets enough attention. Most Christians understand they are the temple of the Holy Spirit. But this verse goes beyond that — the Greek says the believer and Holy Spirit are “one spirit.” Before there were two spirits. After we are born again there is only one. If we grasp this reality, it's astounding. The spirit of a believer is completely united with the Holy Spirit. There are no rifts, no gaps; they are one.

That means in my spirit I am holy. My spirit wants what God wants, loves what He loves, hates what He hates. I'm completely in sync with Him. My spirit isn't double-minded or compromised in any way. My spirit truly is holy as He is holy.

What compromises me is my flesh and my not-yet-renewed mind, the part that does not yet think as God thinks. Scripture never commands us to resist the pull of the Spirit. Instead we are commanded to “walk by the Spirit, so we won't carry out the deeds of the flesh.” Galatians 5:16. Notice also the fruit of the spirit. Galatians 5:22.

My flesh is to be considered crucified (Galatians 5:24), it is to be denied. My soul (mind, will and emotions) needs to be renewed (Romans 12:2); it's still in process. My spirit, one with the Holy Spirit, is already entirely holy. Galatians 5:16-26

LEAN

Read and meditate on these two passages. Consider how the fact that part of you (your spirit — perhaps the deepest part of your identity) is unequivocally holy.

PRAY

Help me to understand the war within that Paul describes in Galatians 5:17-18. Help me to understand that part of me is fully on God's side. Help me to learn to find my identity in my spirit, not my flesh.

Nancy Hoefel

LISTEN

Psalm 139:13-14

LEARN

A Vineyard song from the '90s starts with, "Lord it was You, who created the heavens. Lord, it was You, who put the stars in their place." It continues with all the amazing parts of creation and how awesome God is. The writer asks, "Lord, who am I compared to Your glory? Lord, who am I compared to Your majesty?" Then comes the answer. "I am Your beloved, You love me as I am, unashamed to call me Your own."

These words were life-changing in my late teens and early twenties. God is not ashamed of me, He willingly claims me as His. During worship services, I would let these words wash over me and heal me. You see, I grew up not loving myself, especially my physical body. I was ashamed of the way I looked, especially my weight. I had awful things said to me by others, so much so that I began to believe them to my very core. It wasn't until I truly began to believe that God loved me as I was, no changes necessary, that I began to love myself and let God define me.

Have you had a lie spoken over you that has made you question the very depths of who you are? Have you made choices in your life that have made you feel unworthy? Guess what? God loves you just as you are. You are His beloved, His creation, and He has chosen you.

LEAN

Sometime today tell yourself that you are God's beloved. You are enough, just as you are. Praise God that you are fearfully and wonderfully made. If you have time, listen to Your Beloved, by Vineyard. Allow yourself to hear the words and tell yourself that you are loved just as you are.

PRAY

Lord, I thank You for calling us Your beloved. You have made us in Your image and You love us just as we are, no changes necessary. I pray that Your child will see how much You love them and that their identity is found in Your perfect love.

Amy Sliman

LISTEN

Psalm 139:13-14, Ephesians 1:4-5, 2 Corinthians 5:17,
Matthew 5:14, Romans 8:37

LEARN

In a world constantly pressuring us to define ourselves by our achievements, possessions, appearance, or popularity, it's easy to forget the foundational question: who am I? Society might say we're what we do, what we own, or how we look. Yet Scripture tells us that our true identity is rooted not in what we achieve, but in who God says we are.

You are God's Creation — God intentionally crafted every detail of who you are from your physical appearance to your unique personality and gifts. You are not an accident but a masterpiece in His eyes, created with care and purpose.

You are loved and Chosen — Before the world even began, God chose you. You are not defined by what others say or even by your own doubts. You are defined by His deep, unshakeable love for you. You belong to Him.

You are forgiven and redeemed — In Christ, your past doesn't define you. Through Jesus' sacrifice, you are forgiven and free. Your identity is not in your mistakes but in the forgiveness and grace given through Him.

You are called to reflect his light — God has called you to be a light to reflect His love, compassion, and truth to the world. Your identity in Him isn't just about who you are but also about who you are becoming as you grow in His likeness.

You are more than a conqueror — Life will bring trials and struggles, but your identity is that of a victor, not a victim. God gives you strength and resilience to overcome every challenge, knowing that He is with you.

LEAN

Whenever you find yourself wondering, Who am I? Remember: you are loved, chosen, and purposed by God. This is who you are — today and forever.

PRAY

Lord, help me to see myself through Your eyes. When I am tempted to define myself by the world's standards, remind me that my true identity is found in You. Let me walk confidently, knowing that I am created, loved, forgiven, chosen, and called by You. Teach me to live out who I am in Christ, reflecting Your love and light around me. Amen.

Jane Brooker

LISTEN

Ephesians 2:1-5, 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

LEARN

As a pastor, I meet regularly with people who struggle with their identity in Jesus. The chains from the Enemy have built deep-rooted shame, guilt and regret, and they often feel unworthy. But as we read in the scripture today, BUT GOD! It's easy for me to remind them of these verses, but often ... it takes more counseling, discipling and encouragement. I'm reminded of some lyrics from a brand new song titled "The Cross" by Anne Wilson and Chris Tomlin:

*Come and see a Savior's love that would die to make you new
Nothing you have ever done, can change what mercy's done for you
And if you ever wonder if you're worth so great a cost
Look up and see the cross*

*Everybody's got a list at least a mile long
Of every scar and every sin from everywhere that we've gone wrong
But there's reason for rejoicing, and the reason is because
That list was nailed to the cross*

Wow! That captures ALL that Jesus has done for us. Rick Warren said, "The reason you have value is because of what God says about you ... not because of what other people say about you." We no longer have to live in our past, because Jesus has paid the price, and we are a brand new creation in Christ!

LEAN

Here are a few things for you to ponder in your life today:

- Am I thankful for God's rich mercy, grace & love?
- Am I currently viewing myself through my own lens, or through God's?
- Do I recognize that real self-esteem comes from knowing that God created me, Jesus died for me, and as a Jesus-Apprentice, the Holy Spirit lives in me?
- Do I know someone who struggles in this area? If so, pray for them right now, and then reach out to them to let them know.
- Do I need to talk with someone?

PRAY

Pause now and listen to the voice of God. Confess the areas in your life where you struggle in the area of identity and purpose. Ask Father God to guide you today. Thank Jesus for his incredible sacrifice of love for us. Invite the Holy Spirit to constantly remind you that you are a new creation ... a masterpiece made in the image of God!

Sean Moon

LISTEN

Psalm 139:13-18

LEARN

At a very young age, children learn to hide parts of themselves.

I remember one Christmas when I was in 2nd or 3rd grade. We had a great family evening playing new games, eating our traditional food, and laughing quite a bit. As we were leaving my grandparents' house to drive home, I went to say goodbye to my uncles with big hugs (I was the child that was affectionate, carefree, and open). When I came to my oldest uncle on that side of the family, he stopped me, took a step back, put out his hand, and said, "This is the way men say goodbye," and shook my hand. The handshake itself was fine but, suddenly something that was a major part of me was not. I began to hide my emotions and the ways that I expressed them.

A good part of me became something that I tried to hide, repress, and deny. Doing that created a great deal of confusion about who I was and how I experienced the world. It took decades before I really recognized what had happened and began to seek healing from God. Through a variety of means, God has helped me to reclaim that important part of how He made me. There is still work to do, but I have better relationships and experience much less internal conflict since I began to allow myself to show this part of myself again.

LEAN

God made each of us wonderfully complex. His workmanship is marvelous. But we learn to hide parts of ourselves at a very early age. What parts of who God made you to be are you hiding? Ask God to reveal that to you. Then, ask Him who you can trust to allow you to be fully yourself. Ask whoever is revealed to you to walk with you on the path to restoring your true self.

PRAY

Father, thank You for making me so wonderfully complex and marvelous. Teach me to become the person You created me to be. Show me the hidden parts and give me the courage to invite You to heal and restore my heart.

Alan Rieck

LISTEN

Psalm 8, Isaiah 64:8, Ephesians 2:8-10

LEARN

MASTERPIECE.

What do you think of or envision when you read that word? A painting? Musical arrangement? An exquisite meal? Something else? Since I was little I've been obsessed with the sky, so when I hear "masterpiece," my mind immediately goes to stunning sunrises and sunsets, storm clouds or sunny day cirrus. In September 2023, the aurora borealis that danced across the night sky was one "masterpiece" moment that brought me to tears. But, have you ever thought of yourself when you hear that word?

Ephesians 2:10 tells us that we are God's "masterpiece," "handiwork," "workmanship," or "accomplishment," depending on your Bible translation. You are God's greatest creation, His most accomplished work, designed and knit together with exquisite care, skill, artistry and intention!

Unlike the masterpieces mentioned above, which are fleeting or never change, you and I are works in progress as God shapes us to become more and more like His Son. We are active agents in furthering the Kingdom through loving and serving Him, or the "good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10, NIV). We are all selfish sinners from birth and will have setbacks in this lifelong journey of renewal and transformation to bear the resemblance of Jesus. But when the Enemy tries to tell you that who you were before Jesus is no different than who you are today, remind yourself of who you are because of whose you are — forgiven, loved, His masterpiece.

LEAN

Scan the QR code and take a moment and listen to the song "Masterpiece" by Danny Gokey. Then write down words that describe who you are in Christ and place them in spots where you will be reminded of these truths daily.



PRAY

I am a beautiful mess, a work in progress, but I am Your masterpiece, Lord. Thank You for creating me with purpose and great plans for my life. Shape me to become more like Jesus each and every day. Amen.

Renee Duff

WEEK TWO IDENTITY THEFT

Welcome to week two of the Poiema Project, 50 Days to discover your true identity. Before our 50 days are done, I hope this truth saturates our souls: "Our identity is built upon what Christ has done and what God is doing. If you want to know who you are...you need to know who He is.

But as Christ's work gives us our identity and God continues to shape us, there are forces seeking to steal our identity. So my challenge to us this week is to beware the thief of your identity.

I believe in the existence of spiritual forces of darkness. Satan's not just a Halloween costume or a metaphor for all the evil in the world. We cannot truly get the Bible without accepting the reality of a spiritual battle between good and evil.

This week, we are going to ponder the lies that we believe in the battle for our identity. Which means this is a good week to try a digital fast. Satan is a liar and when we believe his lies we lose our identity. Jesus is the good shepherd who speaks words of truth. We need to give Him our ears. But sometimes our ears are filled with virtual noise.

So this week as you ponder identity theft,

- Check out the explanation of a digital fast on our resource page and try it this week. During the fast, find ways to more intentionally give God your ears.
- Keep reading the "Who Am I" list. Let its truth saturate your soul. By the end of 50 days, you might even have your list memorized!
- Even though it's CWOW Sunday, there is a message on Identity Theft. Find the message and other resources at calvarysc.org/resources

LISTEN

1 Peter 2:9

LEARN

Identity is tough ... At 31 years old, I'm still learning about who I am and the identity that God has given me. As a P.K. I had some conflicting identities that made living life difficult. At church I was who I thought people wanted me to be ... put together, walking hand in hand with Christ, behaving and making good choices. In school, I was who I thought my friends wanted me to be. And those two identities did not always (or often) match up.

I was looking for acceptance anywhere I could find it. And even though I had amazing role models who pushed me to be the person God wanted me to be, the desire to seek acceptance from others always overshadowed that. It was miserable. Basing your identity off of acceptance is a really effective way to avoid living into your true identity. Luckily, I've had people in my life who didn't let me stay in that place. People who reminded me that I was chosen. I was accepted. Not by man but by an unchanging God. A God who designed me with a purpose and gave me an identity that could only be found in Him.

I'm still not fully there. I still find myself at times putting my identity in how others view me ... but I've gotten better. And now, when I feel myself changing parts of who I am to be accepted, I remind myself that I already am accepted. I have already been chosen. And I've already been given an identity.

LEAN

We can get so caught up in the big question of “what is my identity” that we forget about the One who has given us our identity. Take some time today and thank God for choosing you. You are the “special possession” of a God who sent His Son for you! Thank Him and remind yourself of that daily.

PRAY

Jesus, thank you for choosing us. Thank you for the amazing gift of Your Son. I'm sorry for the times I've based my identity on how others view me. Remind me of how You see me. Remind me to base my identity on what You say about me. I love you, Jesus. Amen.

Jake Nold

LISTEN

Romans 6:4

LEARN

Is it still called identity theft if you willingly handed your identity over to be stolen? It is so easy to believe the whispers of the evil one in our heads telling us that our identity is about our social status, our job, our relationships, our accomplishments. We spend so much time focused on how others define us that we fail to focus on the most important part of our identity. Who are we in Christ?

It took me far too long to understand the concept of baptism by submersion. I was baptized as a baby, and repeatedly told my wife that a second baptism wasn't necessary because God got it right the first time. As my faith deepened, I came to understand the importance of the choice to follow Christ, and of the public declaration that we have accepted a new identity in Jesus.

Romans 6:4 says, "We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." In this new life, we are citizens of God's kingdom, and we should "make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy." (Hebrews 12:14)

LEAN

Living in peace is not easy in a world characterized by divisive politics, war, and greed. But God uses the Holy Spirit to provide us with the characteristics we need to put our identity in Him on display at all times. "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22). Let's spend time this week putting this identity on display.

PRAY

Father, use the Holy Spirit to renew in me the identity I want more than anything else — Your child. Help me to truly accept my favor in Your sight, and to put my choice to follow Christ on display in all that I do.

Brian Rabian

LISTEN

John 15:16, Ephesians 1:7, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Romans 8:37-39, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 John 1:9, Ephesians 2:8-12

LEARN

I have a garden, and each year I look forward to planting things such as tomatoes, peppers, and sunflowers. I pick a date to plant them, cultivate the soil, drop in the seed, and nurture it as it grows into a mature plant. Each day as I care for these plants, their roots grow deeper and deeper because of my attention and the blazing hot circle in the sky.

What if, as we spent time with Jesus and nurtured our relationship with Him, we're able to see our roots grow? Just as a planted seed starts to grow, the Word of God starts to deepen and grow within a person. The Enemy seeks to steal our identity in Christ. He wants us to forget who we are as beloved children of God, chosen and called for a purpose. When we become stronger in who we are in Christ, we are able to identify the lies that the world puts in our head. Maybe the lie of I'm not good enough, no one loves me, or something is wrong with me resonates with you. In those moments, remind yourself of the scripture that speaks most to you.

It's the time spent with Jesus that determines what we yield.

LEAN

What lies are you believing? Take the time to write them down. Then, replace those lies with scriptural truth. Look at the scriptures if you need help.

PRAY

Father, help me to see myself as Your masterpiece. I trust Your Word that I am created in your image. Ground me in Your Word, so that I may flourish and bear fruit for Your kingdom. Remind me daily that I am a cherished child of Yours, called to walk in purpose and power. Protect my heart from the lies that seek to steal my identity. Amen.

Courtney Logue

LISTEN

Psalm 139:13-16

LEARN

The Enemy wants you and me to feel: (A) beat down, convinced we're unworthy — unloveable — easy to overlook; (B) self-focused, always seeking self-improvement, looking to be in control; or (C) overwhelmed, distracted, looking for our identity in possessions or in a person ("if they just love me I'll be enough"). If Satan wins, we will never truly walk in the preciousness of who GOD created us to be. We'll never fully walk in the victory that Jesus bought for us at the cross. You are precious to Him! He has shaped you to be YOU. No need for self-loathing, pride, control, trying to be something we are not to gain someone's approval or love. He loves you just the way He made you. He sees you as His perfect, loved, wanted, can't-wait-to-spend-time-with-you child! He calls you His Beloved!

LEAN

Parts A, B, and C above are not an exhaustive list of ways the Enemy tries to pull us from our true identity in Christ. Can you nail down 1 or 2 lies you might believe about yourself, your worth, your identity that contradict who God says you are?

Find a scripture that clearly reminds you that you are NOT those things. Write it and post it somewhere that you will consistently see it as a reminder that you are His Beloved.

E.g. I struggle with feeling like I don't belong. I will fight against that and hold onto the words of 1 John 3:19-20 NIV

PRAY

Holy Spirit, please come and replace every part of my heart, mind, and emotions that is distracted by what the Enemy tries to sneak in. Transform how I think about who and WHOSE I am. Thank you that I am Your Beloved: that is my true identity first and foremost. Help me to walk in that reality more and more each day. I praise You for loving me, for wanting me, for rescuing me and for giving me life eternal and life abundant here and now. I love you Lord!

Kimberly Dick

LISTEN

1 Samuel 18:6-8

LEARN

“Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands.” We’re all drawn to comparison, looking to build up the good and minimize the bad. Nothing irks us like having our ledger balance flip-flopped, especially publicly. Saul becomes filled with rage at the knowledge that David’s record exceeds his own. The real trouble is that Saul never came to recognize that the taunting songs were merely the occasion for his anger, not the cause of it.

Three chapters earlier, in 1 Samuel 15, the prophet Samuel tried to shine the light of God’s healing on Saul’s real problem. Verse 17 says, “Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel.” Saul measured himself and found himself wanting.

Our own eyes are not a reliable measure of our identity. The Enemy loves to whisper in our ears, “You’re nothing.” Oh, how far from it! It is the Lord’s anointing, the seal of His presence, that defines who we are. He chose to set His Spirit within us. Our roles and achievements are merely evidence of God’s goodness and grace in and through us, not the measure of who we are.

LEAN

Where have I become angry when my strengths were minimized or weaknesses magnified? Take some time today to listen to the Spirit as He brings convicting healing to your heart. Am I the one trying to flip the ledger on God? Do I feel like God "owes" me different circumstances? Have I minimized His greatness in an attempt to magnify my own? Let the amazement of unmerited grace and His overwhelming love wash away the lies of the Enemy who wants to make you doubt who you really are.

PRAY

Loving Father, I confess that I daily need to remember who You are. You are the one who loves me beyond measure. Your love is what gives me worth, purpose, direction, and life without end. Let the doubts that play in my mind be a reminder to me that the spiritual battle for my soul is itself evidence of how valuable I am.

Sarah Christian

LISTEN

John 10:10, John 1:12-13, 1 Thessalonians 1:4, Galatians 3:26

LEARN

We go to great lengths to protect our personal identity. We make sure that our Social Security cards are tucked away in a safe place where no one would ever think to look for them. We create passwords for our online banking keeping our personal information in a safe and secure location.

I have to examine myself. Do I spend that much energy and effort on protecting my identity in Christ? Am I making sure that the Enemy cannot get in? And what tools and measures do I have in place to protect that identity?

LEAN

The best way I know is that I keep the words of truth close to me daily, using them as passwords to protect me. He loves me deeply and I am His precious child. Memorize a couple verses that remind yourself of His truth about who You are in Him.

PRAY

Father, we want to keep Your promises, Your word hidden deep within our hearts. Help me to always be on guard and to shut down the lies of the Enemy when he whispers that we are not enough. He cannot have the joy that I have in my identity in Jesus.

LISTEN

Mark 10:2-5; Psalm 23

LEARN

Often people will speak about how “dumb” sheep are. I have read that they are actually very intelligent animals, appearing to have strong cognitive abilities and forming deep relationships with one another in their herd. What is true is that they are dependent on their shepherd and his voice, and without the shepherd, that is when they go astray and get lost from the flock. A few years ago I read the above familiar passage, but this time something stuck out to me. In verse 5 it says “But they will never follow a stranger, in fact they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” Wow ... they will NOT follow a stranger because they do not recognize his voice. What about us? How often do you take in lies from the Enemy about yourself, your worth, your identity, or God’s love for you? If we are dependent on the Good Shepherd, like the sheep, the stranger’s voice should make us run because we do not recognize it as God’s voice!

LEAN

Ask the Good Shepherd to reveal what words from the “stranger” you have been listening to and believing about yourself. Ask Him to help you find scriptures that identify the truth in order to combat those lies, and ask Him to make your ears and heart more keen to His voice over any others’.

PRAY

Lord it says that You are the Good Shepherd and You laid down Your life for the sheep, for us. May we become so familiar with Your voice and Truth, that when the Enemy spews lies, we will instantly recognize that it is not You and be able to recall the Truth of who we are and Whose we are!

WEEK THREE I AM NOT WHAT I DID

Welcome to week three of our Poiema Project. For the last two weeks we've been setting the stage for our identity discovery. We asked the question, "Who am I" and we introduced a major reason why we struggle with our identity...it's the spiritual battle of identity theft. Remember you are the poiema of God! You are what God does. You are His handiwork. You are God's masterpiece. So when it comes to identity, our identity is received, not achieved. We surrender to it, we don't strive for it. My failures do not define me. Jesus sees me, forgives me and loves me deeply. Shame does not define me. Sin does not define me. I am forgiven and favored, redeemed and restored. Don't lose sight of our theme verse,

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:10

The theme this week is "I am not what I've done." Your identity is shaped by what Christ has done, so your past cannot keep you from God's future. He's writing your story and it's a story of redemption and grace. This week as we take one more look at some of the internal barriers to living into our true identity, let me encourage you to do an audit. You've had two weeks now to daily read through your "Who am I?" list. This week, do an evaluation. Which 2-3 are the hardest for you to believe? Focus on them this week. So, during this coming week;

- Do a "who am I" audit.
- Write out your "I will" statements and share what God is doing in you with someone.
- And don't forget, for more identity resources, visit calvarysc.org/resources.

LISTEN

Galatians 2:20

LEARN

How often do we find ourselves trapped by our past? The weight of our mistakes, failures, and poor choices can feel like an anchor, holding us back from embracing the fullness of life God intends for us. But today's verse offers a liberating truth: in Christ, we are not defined by what we did.

Paul reminds us that when we accept Christ, our old self — with all its sins and shortcomings — is crucified with Him. This isn't just poetic language; it's a profound spiritual reality. The person we once were, bound by sin and separated from God, has died.

This is the miracle of the Christian life — we're given a new identity, one that's no longer rooted in our past actions but in the present reality of Christ's indwelling presence.

This means that our daily lives, decisions, and self-perception should be guided not by the echoes of our past, but by the truth of who we are in Christ. We are loved, redeemed, and made new.

The verse ends with a beautiful reminder of why this transformation is possible: because Jesus "loved me and gave himself for me." Our freedom from the past isn't something we achieved; it's a gift given by a Savior who loved us enough to die for us.

So today, if you find yourself haunted by past mistakes or defined by old labels, remember: that's not who you are anymore. In Christ, you are a new creation. Your identity is not in what you did, but in who He is and what He has done for you.

LEAN

1. Stand in front of a mirror.
2. Look at yourself and say out loud: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."
3. Take a deep breath and imagine the old self, with all its mistakes and shortcomings, fading away.
4. As you exhale, envision Christ's presence filling you.
5. Now, state one positive attribute of Christ that you want to embody today. For example: "Today, Christ's patience lives in me" or "Today, Christ's love for others lives in me."
6. Throughout the day, when faced with challenges or temptations to fall back into old patterns, recall your morning mirror moment and silently repeat, "Christ lives in me."
7. Before bed, reflect on moments during the day when you were aware of Christ living in you. Write these down if possible.

PRAY

Lord Jesus, thank You for the new life You've given me. Help me to fully embrace the truth that I am not defined by my past, but by Your presence in me. Teach me to live by faith, trusting in Your love and sacrifice. May my life reflect the reality that Christ lives in me. Amen.

Isaac Balban

LISTEN

Luke 7:36-50

LEARN

My favorite passage to teach for the women's Bible study at the county jail is Luke 7:36-50. That said, several years ago when I felt the Holy Spirit nudging me to teach this passage, I didn't want to. Not sure why. The Holy Spirit was persistent, so I complied.

A very pretty young woman attended. A few minutes into the lesson I noticed this woman's eyes were watering. I thought she must have severe allergies. Her eyes continued to water through the whole lesson.

We had been discussing how Jesus saw the "sinful woman" as opposed to how Simon saw her. Simon was blind to the miracle of redemption happening before his eyes, but Jesus saw her — her hunger, her repentance. In His eyes all she had done in her past didn't matter. Her repentance, her passionate love for Jesus now defined her.

Turns out, the pretty young woman didn't have allergies; she was crying. She confessed to the group that she was a prostitute. Some of the other women in the jail had been persecuting her because of it. I realized the Holy Spirit knew this story probably more than any other in Scripture was what would bring healing to her heart.

That was several years ago. I don't know what happened to her. I do know I've never seen her again at the jail. It is my hope Jesus' last words to the "sinful woman" are still ringing in her ears, "Your sins have been forgiven."

LEAN

Consider: how can I allow Jesus' forgiveness to define me? Offer Him a response of love and gratitude.

PRAYER

Jesus, help me to remember that Your forgiveness defines me, not my failures, not my past. Let Your words to the woman in Luke 7 also ring in my ears, "Your sins have been forgiven."

Nancy Hoefel

LISTEN

Ephesians 2:10

LEARN

I am not what I did. Can there be any better news for us than this? Not one of us can say that we have lived a sin-free or mistake-free life. Personally, I can look back on a history of foolish decisions, hurts directed at others, and self-inflicted wounds, so many that I often can't look at that person in the mirror without a tremendous amount of shame. And sometimes I feel sure that God is ashamed of me as well. But the good news is we are not defined by our past mistakes, and God does not ask us to hold onto our shame.

1 John 1:9 tells us that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." When we lay our mess at His feet, He will use every bit of it for our good. If we let Him, God will use the results of our mistakes as the foundation upon which He can build a new life. And still, rather than shedding our shame and guilt, we too often carry it on our backs, with our heads hung low, unwilling to truly embrace that we are His masterpiece. "He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago" (Ephesians 2:10).

LEAN

Today, let's focus on raising our heads to accept the renewal in front of us, asking Father God to forgive us for too often picking up what we've already laid at His feet.

PRAY

Father, thank You for the many ways You save us from ourselves, free us of our shame, and renew our hearts to pursue the good that You have planned for us.

Brian Rabian

LISTEN

Romans 7:15

LEARN

I believe this verse speaks to human nature and our personal experiences with temptation, sin and doing what we know is right. Paul is expressing confusion about why we act against our own will, doing things we dislike. I know in my own personal life this scripture holds significant value to me. It reminds me of where I came from, the victories I have celebrated along the way and the areas I still struggle with. To me it speaks to generational curses and behaviors: toxic patterns that are passed down, causing a ripple effect. It takes boldness and grit to say, no more, this cycle ends here with me. This is not who God created me to be. This is not the mother I choose to be for my children. I am choosing to press into the painful areas of my life to find healing and peace — not only for myself but for my daughters. This is a journey we all face at some point in our lives and a process that doesn't happen overnight. But we were not designed to wallow in our regret from past sins and become hand-in-hand partners with guilt and shame. We were made to live in freedom and walk in His light.

LEAN

My challenge to you today is to ask God where you need to be refined in your life. Maybe you already know an area in which you are struggling or for which you need prayer. I encourage you to talk to someone about it, be open, vulnerable and willing to press into the hard stuff. Isolating ourselves in shame only prolongs the healing and redemption God offers all of us. Our identity and self-worth can only be found through Christ.

PRAY

Father, today I feel like Paul, with so much baggage from my past. I continue to seek Your forgiveness. Holy Spirit I ask for Your strength to overcome what I am struggling with. I ask to be transformed by Your love and believe in the freedom of Your forgiveness. You promise new mercies each day. In You we can find strength in Your goodness and grace. And, when I mess up again, help me not to hide in shame, but to give me the courage to try again. Thank You for Your unconditional love for me. Amen.

Bridget Zigler

LISTEN

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

LEARN

I struggled with unresolved hurt and anger due to trauma from physical and emotional abuse as a kid. This, in turn, manifested itself into my drug and alcohol abuse, violence, emotional chaos and instability during my teenage years. As a very young boy I tried to be a perfectionist in an attempt to earn the love of my mother and others, but those efforts rarely produced the results I desired.

Growing up in a single-parent household with a mother who was a victim of abuse, not having dealt with her trauma in a healthy manner, enabled the cycle continuing for my brother and me. I turned to the only coping mechanisms that I knew until I met my beautiful wife Sarah. She listened with compassion and God worked through her to communicate the life-changing, transformative truth of His unconditional love that would soften my heart and bless me with the opportunity to see my past struggles and hurts as something that contribute to my steadfast faith and a newfound identity of being a loved child of God.

I now view past struggles as tools. Experiences that now lead to opportunities to connect with others who see themselves as trapped and don't consider themselves as worthy. This drives my passion for demonstrating and communicating to every person that Jesus has a seat for them at His table. He can use our shortcomings for the greatest good, and He chooses the least likely of ambassadors, at least by the world's standards and expectations.

LEAN

Seek the face of your Heavenly Father. Know that you are loved and wanted. He is not surprised or ashamed of you, in fact, you are invited to His table and He can use everything that you bring to Him for the greatest good.

PRAY

Father we thank You for Your truth and Your love, that while we were in the pit You stretched out Your loving arms and embraced all that we are and You gave us a new identity. You have great works for us, Your masterpieces, to do. Thank You for adopting us into your family as your children and giving us hope and a purpose. Give us boldness to share our stories, which demonstrate the truth of Your love. Amen!

Bill Ewing

LISTEN

Exodus 3:7-14; Romans 5:8

LEARN

At the end of high school, I made a series of poor choices and deeply hurt one of my best friends. Rather than face her, I fled my hometown and other friendships. Shortly thereafter I gave my life to Jesus. Over the next 10 years, Jesus (and a wonderful faith community) taught me how to be a good friend, disciple, leader, and mentor. Then, amidst a thriving church, job, small group ministry, and friend group, my husband and I both felt God's call to leave our safety in Raleigh, NC, to return to my hometown in central Pennsylvania. The thought of returning made me feel nauseous. I felt how I imagined Moses felt: "Who am I? Surely they haven't forgotten what I've done. The only thing I'm going to accomplish is giving Jesus a bad name." However, I love God's response to Moses when he asks, "Who am I?" It wasn't about Moses (or me or you) — it's about the living God who promises to be with us where He sends us. God's description of Himself is sufficient with "I AM WHO AM." Wow.

Even though I fled my hometown, God hadn't. God wanted me to return. God saw the lost and broken and, while I was still a sinner, He graciously carved and equipped me for this return. I have been forged into a new creation — I am not what I did. But best of all, God is with me.

LEAN

Which of God's character traits do you lack the most? Spend some time asking God to be with you and carry that trait for you today and this week.

PRAY

God, thank You for washing away my iniquities and making me white as snow. I am so thankful that in You, I am a new creation. I ask that You replace my self-doubt and questions with a deep-rooted understanding of Your extravagant abilities and character. Amen.

Kelley Rountree

LISTEN

John 13:14

LEARN

Have you ever met someone who embraces sin like a morning cup of coffee? They live carelessly, unashamed, with reckless abandonment? On the surface they look so free, as you struggle to suppress the same sins, swirling around in your soul.

Alone, you confess them with an agonized whisper...they cheer and celebrate alongside friends with shouts in the streets. You stifle and smother the embers of sinful desires that burn inside your heart...they fan the flames of hell itself inside their soul.

But as you cry in the darkness with shame, they cry in the darkness without hope.

You are a prisoner of your past...they are a prisoner of their future.

There is only one difference between a sinner and a saint: Jesus Christ.

Jesus got dirty feet walking alongside sinners. Jesus was a sinner, he was a servant, who was willing to sit alongside sinners and allow his feet to be covered by the dirt of this world.

Then Mary washed his feet with her tears, and Jesus washed the feet of his disciples.

How do we shake off these feelings of failure and shame that make us feel so dirty? How can we preach hope to sinners when we are still shackled with shame? Easy!

When sinners and saints sit down next to each other and take off their shoes, they suddenly realize...they BOTH have dirty feet.

LEAN

But... "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet."

Dirty feet remind us where we once walked, not where we currently stand. Dear Saint, when you take off your shoes, your feet may be dirty...but you are standing on Holy ground. You are forgiven!

PRAY

Lord, thank you for "cleansing us from all unrighteousness."

Margie Fisher

WEEK FOUR I AM NEW

Welcome to week four of our Poiema Project, 50 days to discover your true identity. For the next few weeks we are going to look at a series of statements that are true about you if you are a follower of Christ. They are true about you regardless of what you feel, what you do or what's been done to you. They are true of your identity. They describe you at the deepest parts of your soul. Here is this week's statement, "I am a New Creation." Just stop reading for a moment and repeat that outloud. I am a new creation.

You are. And every new creation starts with and leads to a new day. The possibility of a new day is woven through the heart of the gospel. Our whole movement started on a new day, it's what we celebrate every Easter, every time we celebrate communion or baptism, every Sunday. It's called Resurrection Day. Think about the people who followed Jesus on the day before the resurrection. Don't you suppose that the next day felt like a brand new day?

In Christ, we are new. We are new creations. It's a new day and God is writing a new story. This weekend we did some cardboard stories, if you were with us, you know what I mean. If you did a cardboard story, what goes on the "Once I was" side and what goes on the "now I am" side?

This week as you work through the daily devotions,

- Make a list of what's new in your life, since you committed your life to Christ.
- Don't forget to keep praying the Poiema Project Prayer and reading the "Who am I" list. Spend extra time there this week. These statements are some of your "now I am" truths.
- And check out the resources at calvarysc.org/resources. There may be some new stuff!

LISTEN

1 Corinthians 15:9-10

LEARN

These two verses in 1 Corinthians are some of my favorite scriptures in the whole bible. Paul tells us that he should be considered the least of the Apostles and that he doesn't deserve to be called an Apostle. Why? Because of the fact that he had persecuted the church. Paul had thrown people into prison, broken up families, and even thrown in his vote with those committing murder. He passionately tried to destroy the body and bride of Jesus. How did someone like him become an Apostle? He gives us the answer in verse 10 — "but by the grace of God I am what I am." Paul wasn't who he used to be; he had been saved and transformed.

God's grace didn't make it so that what Paul had done became untrue. God's grace made it so that Paul could become a new creation. What defined Paul was no longer his past sins but rather the grace and love of Jesus. This is the same work that God is wanting to do in each of our lives.

LEAN

We will be unable to fully allow God's grace to work in us and through us as long as we're living out of our old nature or the sins of our past. Take some time to prayerfully reflect on anything that you are allowing to "define" who you are other than God's grace. Give it to Jesus in prayer.

PRAY

Father, I thank You for Your amazing grace that has caused me to be a new creation and is still at work conforming me to the image of Your Son, Jesus. Help me to live according to who You say that I am, and to work according to Your grace that is at work in me. Amen.

Scott Leddy

LISTEN

2 Corinthians 5:17 (AMP); Psalm 103:12; Romans 12:2;
Ephesians 4:22-24; and Mark 3:35

LEARN

A highlight of a trip to Italy this past summer was a tour of an organic lemon farm in Sorrento. The owner described the grafting process that has enabled his crops to thrive. Lemon tree shoots are grafted onto bitter orange rootstock, providing a multitude of benefits including (1) resistance to diseases and pests which promotes longevity and the ability to produce fruit for extended periods due to their robust root systems; (2) a more consistent growth process, fruit size and quality; and (3) cold hardiness. Imagine that! Immediately, the concept of being grafted into Christ shifted from black and white to color. When we trade our old lives for new life in Christ, our tender shoot is spliced into Him and we receive all the benefits of HIS strength, resistance, and root system. We become a brand new creation.

But the Enemy still calls us by our old name. “Call a dog by a name enough times and he will eventually respond to it.”¹ The Liar has repeatedly called us names — defeated, lost, hopeless, too much, not enough. It takes diligence to recognize his schemes and stand up to the bullying; to say “that is NOT my name.” I am no longer that person. My sins have been removed as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). I am being transformed by the renewing of my mind (Romans 12:2). I am putting off my old self and putting on my new self — the self created after the likeness of God (Ephesians 4:22-24).

When the Enemy calls you names, don’t even turn around. That’s old news. Eyes fixed on Jesus, your brother, who has your back. (Mark 3:35)

¹ Driven to Distraction by Dr. Edward Hallowell, Chapter 2

LEAN

Listen to the way you think and talk about yourself. Are you talking about the new you, the one that is grafted into Christ, or the old you that no longer exists?

PRAY

Father, we were never made to live in this world without You. Thank You for offering us the gift of being grafted into Christ who strengthens, protects and steadies us. Help us to take our thoughts captive and recognize when we are living under our old names instead of embracing the newness and hope of life in You.

Becky Martin

LISTEN

Romans 6:1-14, 20-23

LEARN

As a child I loved watching *The Price is Right* while staying with my grandparents. Nothing could get us more excited than the phrase: "A New Car!" There is something amazing about new cars, homes, and even more so, you and I.

Paul, the writer of Romans, says that we can "walk in newness of life" when we die to sin and come alive to God in Christ Jesus. Have you heard the phrase dead to sin and alive to Christ?

I fully know and believe that this is true, and yet struggle to live into it. Christ accomplished making us new at the cross, and defeated death through His resurrection. The exhilaration of hearing God say "A New (put your name here)!" is our reality. You and I are made new through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

As Romans 6 continues it reminds us that we need to die in order to live. "We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin." THROUGH CHRIST we are given a new nature and one that can and needs to die to sin and walk in newness of life, IN and THROUGH HIM!

LEAN

Where do you need to die to sin and trust God that you are made new in Christ? It is His death and resurrection that gives life to all who believe!

PRAY

Thanks be to God, that I who was once a slave of sin have become obedient from the heart, and have been set free from sin, and have become a slave of righteousness. (Romans 6:17-18) Oh God, forgive me when I choose sin and remind me of my newness in YOU!

Garret White

LISTEN

Romans 6:1-11

LEARN

I love Baptism Sundays! I love watching the faces of people, smiles spreading across their faces as water streams over them and engulfed by pure joy. Have you ever experienced the thrill of this experience?

I was in high school when I took this step. The feeling of water rushing over my face as my pastor plunged me under the water brought out momentary anxiety but was soon replaced with exhilaration as I burst forth from my watery "death." I'm not sure I can adequately express those emotions but on Baptism Sundays I get to witness it in the faces of those who have followed this path I took so long ago. It reawakens in me, every time, my own experience. The body remembers and I'm renewed.

The act of being baptized illustrates in real life what Paul is teaching in Romans 6:1-11. In a few seconds we go through death, burial and resurrection. Verses 7-8 lay out the reason for joy, "... since a person who has died is free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him ..." Dead to sin. Alive with Him! It's an amazing experience!

LEAN

Have you taken the plunge? Have you experienced the life-renewing joy of being alive with Jesus and/or demonstrating that through baptism? If you've never experienced baptism, talk to one of the pastors about it today. If you have, take a few minutes to close your eyes and let your body remember. Remember the newness. Remember the new life. And live in that today.

PRAY

Jesus, Your death and resurrection have enabled us to live a new life in You. Thank You. Give us courage to follow what You are asking us today.

Ruth Rieck

For more information about baptism, go to calvarysc.org/baptism

LISTEN

Behold, I will do something new. Now it will spring forth.
Isaiah 43:19

LEARN

In the past couple of years, two of our beloved family members died. As I grappled with grief, I got through each day by frequently asking God for faith to face this new normal.

My new normal felt perplexing and grim.

But one day last June in Canada's Waterton National Park, as my husband and I hiked through a forest that had been ravaged by fire in 2017, a perspective unfolded before me. On the hillside, acres of charred tree trunks stripped of branches and needles or leaves stood pointing to the sky. The bereft trunk skeletons standing in long winding ranks seemed forlorn. Yet, in their posture, determined.

I could fall in line with the remnant trunks and belong.

As I considered the view, another feature emerged. I noticed lush vegetation—grasses and plants of varied, rich greens surging up from the forest floor. The vibrant, persisting life seemed to tickle the trunk ankles.

I recognized that even in the wake of devastation new life filled with promise springs up for me, too.

The regeneration visible on the hillside repeats the pattern of Jesus' experience on earth—devastating suffering, death, and then conquering resurrection. Jesus invites us to a new normal that doesn't end when our time here on earth is up. This new normal continues into eternity.

LEAN

"Behold" means: make sure you see this. So behold. Look for signs of new life—plants that refuse to die (even in the dismal Pennsylvania winters), newborn babies, artists sharing various forms of creativity—and say thanks to God

PRAY

When I feel destroyed by life's harshness, help me know you are near. You'll be nearby as my heart opens to the promise of new life.

Faith McDonald

LISTEN

Romans 12:2, John 15:15, Psalm 51:10-12

LEARN

I dreaded weekends.

Relocating for a job meant family and friends were now far away. Facing days of extreme boredom with no “better” things to do, I gave my time to Jesus. I began watching sermons online and writing down scripture verses in my journal, something I never had the time for when my social life was bustling. Having accepted Christ when I was young, I had no real relationship with Him. Now my relationship with Jesus blossomed. He became my best friend. Slowly, those verses began to stick. New things happened in my brain when God’s word moved in. Then, abruptly, it all clicked ... Romans 12:2.

Literally, and in ways I can’t describe unless you’ve been there or tried it for yourself, I realized I had been TRANSFORMED by the renewal of my mind. The way I looked at the world, at the people in my life, how I responded to situations in view of how Christ would, I KNEW that change had occurred. Made new in Christ, renewed by His Spirit, I understood that nothing else will EVER satisfy like He can. I’m ever grateful at how He used that time of boredom for His glory.

LEAN

Renewal is an ongoing process, not a one-time event. Ponder how you're spending your time — are you choosing paths of eternal significance that bring you closer to Jesus? Open your Bible, experience the transformation Jesus offers, "and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace." — H.H. Lemmel

PRAY

Lord, I want to be transformed by Your word as it says in Romans 12:2, and I confess the time I've squandered seeking things of lesser value. Turning to You now, humbled by Your awesome power and might, bring me to a place where I need You. Make me a student of Your Word, lead me, and may the light of my new life point others toward You.

Steve Logue

LISTEN

Psalm 51: 10-12

LEARN

Gardening brings me immense joy, and I often find myself reflecting on the profound parallels between nurturing plants and the spiritual growth of Jesus' followers. Just as plants require sunlight, water, and care to thrive, our spiritual well-being flourishes through faith, prayer, and community. Each seed planted in the soil reminds me of the seeds of faith sown in our hearts, which with patience and dedication, grow underground in darkness into a vibrant testament of God's love. The process of pruning and weeding mirrors the spiritual discipline needed to remove obstacles and foster a closer relationship with Jesus and a renewed life in Christ. In both gardening and faith, the journey is one of continuous growth, renewal, and the promise of a bountiful harvest.

LEAN

How is God at work in sowing seeds of faith in your heart? Have you experienced seasons of being transplanted in darkness, pruning, and weeding in your life? Reflect on these seasons of growth and renewal, thanking God for them as they foster a closer relationship with Him and a renewed life in Christ.

PRAY

Thank you for loving me, Jesus. Your love renews and transforms me. Like a plant that is transplanted and pruned, may I continue to grow on this path, walking hand-in-hand with you as my source of light in times of confusion and my peace in times of distress. May I be transformed and renewed into your likeness. Amen

WEEK FIVE I AM CHOSEN

Welcome to week five of our 50 Day Poema Project. We are more than halfway done. This week our truth statement is all about being chosen. You are chosen. All week long I've thought about this word, chosen. There is something very powerful about the concept of being chosen.

Think of some of our metaphors and moments of being chosen. For example, maybe you were chosen for a promotion at work, that's a good identity boost, right? Or how about marriage? What an amazing thing it is to be chosen right? To know that someone has chosen you and vowed to love you. Lynn and I have been married for 30 years; I still haven't gotten over the fact that she said yes to me (of course neither has she...). Or how about the image of adoption? Adoption is at the very heart of the gospel. We have been adopted into the family of God. And when we see adoption in action today, something grabs our hearts. Adoption is a pretty amazing choosing.

We have been chosen and adopted into the family of God. That's what He's done and because of what He's done, that's who we are. We're his children. So, this week...

- On the resource page is an article I wrote a few years ago for a retreat center. It's title "Being the Beloved." Pray through it as though you never heard it before.
- Keep going with the "I will" statements and share what you are learning with someone!
- And check out our resource page, calvarysc.org/resources. Some great books, articles and videos for further study.

LISTEN

Romans 8:14-17, Ephesians 1:5

LEARN

If you know Team Sublett, you likely know some of our story. We expanded our family through adoption ... six times in six years. Some of the adoptions were international. Some were domestic. But they all had at least one thing in common. At some point near the end of the adoption process, we stood before a judge who uttered something along these lines: "This is now your child; these are now your parents, your family. Nothing you can do from this point forward can change this. This child has all the rights and privileges, all the responsibilities and expectations as all your other children. For all practical purposes, as of today, it's as though this child has always been yours.

LEAN

We are all adopted in and through Jesus Christ. God wanted us to be His children, so He drew a plan long before you and I were born. Adopting us gave Him great pleasure (Eph 1:5). God says that He has given us His Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, not the spirit of slavery to fear, our old way of life, or anything else that would compete with Him. He gives us the privilege of calling Him Abba, a Hebrew term that carries the idea of intimacy and obedience. Jesus called the Father Abba, and we can too. In our adoption, He has made us His children ... and His heirs. What is God saying to you?

PRAY

Abba, thank You for loving us, for making our adoption not only possible but a reality. I pray that You would help us to settle into Your love, to live in the joy of our relationship with You, and to walk with You in intimacy and obedience. Help us to live as sons and daughters of the Most High God, and to carry on the family business.

Stacy Sublett

LISTEN

Ephesians 1:4-5

LEARN

It took almost a full year of foster care until I was chosen by a family. Of course, as a newborn I didn't know what was happening to me, and I have no memory of a home other than the one my adoptive parents Jack and Fran provided for me. I was too young to know the heartache of waiting to be adopted, but I have certainly looked back many times on the events that transpired with gratitude and even relief. What would my life have been like if I'd grown up in foster care without the love and support of a permanent family?

I have lived with the realization that I had been deeply longed for and wanted my whole life, but I kept that thought especially close to my heart during my difficult/awkward teenage years. Later while at the Penn State Brandywine campus, I attended a Christian fellowship group and learned more about a God that also deeply longed to have a relationship with people, so much that He sent His Son Jesus to the earth to die for our sins. On a summer afternoon in 1982, I asked Jesus to be my Lord and Savior and experienced my second adoption — this time into the family of God!

Ephesians 1:4-5 says "Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure."

LEAN

Our Heavenly Father invites us to live with the realization that we have always been loved and longed for by Him. And He wants us to be more than just a member of His family. He desires to have a deep, intimate relationship with us.

PRAY

Lord, thank You for the love that You have for each of us that started before we ever heard about You. Thank You for the chance to be a part of your family! Today, help me to live in the full assurance of how You feel about me.

Ed McCash

LISTEN

Ephesians 2:1-10, Deuteronomy 7:7-8

LEARN

You are a child of the King of creation, chosen to be His own. As you read those words, do they resonate with profound sweetness? Maybe they feel neutral: an intellectual statement that you acknowledge must be true. It's in the Bible, after all. Or maybe you feel them striking against a resistance in your soul: how could I be chosen? If I'm honest, I've felt a bit of all three at times.

In his preface to the Screwtape Letters, C.S. Lewis wrote that the "ruthless, sleepless, unsmiling fixation on the self" is the mark of hell. To pull away the cover from the septic tank of our own hearts and to see our sins, failures, and weaknesses in the full light of reality would be torturous.

But God does see it all.

We expend so much energy trying to minimize, blame-shift, or cover up exactly the mess that Jesus came to redeem. When we acknowledge what God already knows about us, it sets us free from thinking that we earned His grace. That's the beauty of being chosen: it's not by our doing or by our merit. To be honest before God about the debt I owe is to stop looking at myself and to be in awe of Him. I'm His child, not because I deserve it, because I cleaned myself up, because I avoided "that" sin. He loves me because He loves me.

LEAN

It's hard to be vulnerable. Look for some time this week when you can talk with a trusted friend, and see if you can be honest about some of the places where God wants to release you from believing that you have to be deserving of His love. You are His child, not His hired hand.

PRAY

Abba Father, I need you. Holy Spirit, I need you to remind me every day that I am no longer a slave to fear and my need to self-protect. Jesus, I need you. I need to see you on the cross, taking what I deserve, so that I can be freed from my mess to delight in all that You deserve that you impart to me: the freedom, joy, and security of being loved as a child.

Sarah Christian

LISTEN

1 Peter 2:9

LEARN

This verse in 1 Peter 2:9 felt perfect to represent how God chooses us and adopts us into his family. This verse shows how we are so special to God and that he chooses for us to be adopted into his family and brought into his holy light. Peter shows us that God's people are meant to be a part of this chosen generation. We must praise God for caring so much about us that He takes us out of the darkness (that could be fear, anxiety, or despair) and brings us into the light that is full of God's love which provides us with joy. I remember seeing this kind of love when our family adopted my sisters. His unconditional love covered us all.

LEAN

We will not be able to praise God for bringing us into His wonderful light if we are stuck in darkness with our anxieties and fears. Take some time to ask God to show you how to lay down your anxieties and fears and to trust that you are fully loved and chosen by Him.

PRAY

Father, I thank You for choosing to adopt me into Your family. Thank You for taking me out of the darkness that surrounded me and bringing me into Your light. Help me to show others the same love that You have shown me so that I can help to bring them into Your light.

Kayla Leddy

LISTEN

Jeremiah 29:11-14, Psalm 139:14-16

LEARN

It's estimated that the average person sees about 1,000 advertisements every day. It's hard to believe, until you start paying attention to all the brands surrounding you that are screaming for your attention. Although we are surrounded by distractions, these verses remind us that God, in His infinite love, chose us long before we ever knew Him. He didn't choose us because of anything we've done, but because of who He is — a loving Father who desires to bring us into His family. In our fast-paced society it's easy to be distracted from the Lord, who is yearning for a relationship with you. It can be hard for me to sit down and have solitude with God when 15 other things are nagging for my attention. I shouldn't wonder why I'm feeling distant from God when I haven't devoted even 10 minutes to Him recently. A spiritual life requires our effort. When we give our undivided attention to Him, and take time to listen, we will feel more chosen and loved. Solitude begins with an intentional time and a place for God, and Him alone. Once we have committed ourselves to spending time in solitude, we develop an attentiveness to God's voice in us. Eliminate your distractions, and establish your solitude with God.

LEAN

Throughout your day, whenever you see an advertisement or feel distracted, remember how the ad longs for your attention, just like how God desires to be in solitude with you, His chosen child.

PRAY

Dear Lord, I pray that You would help me clear out the distractions around myself, so I can spend time in solitude with You. Would You raise my attentiveness to Your voice in me? Help me find peace in the chaotic world that surrounds me. Allow me to enjoy the silence, so I may listen to You. Amen.

LISTEN

John 1:12-13 (The Message)

LEARN

Oak trees are truly remarkable, aren't they? Their strength and resilience are inspiring. It's amazing how they can withstand storms and harsh conditions, standing tall and strong. Our spiritual growth can mirror the benefits and characteristics of an oak tree.

1. Oak trees clean the air, provide shade, and offer habitats for wildlife. Similarly, as we grow in Christ, we can positively influence our surroundings, offering support, love, and a sense of community to others.
2. Grafting an oak tree preserves desirable traits and ensures consistency. As adopted children of God, we inherit His traits, such as love, patience, and kindness. This spiritual grafting helps us grow to reflect His character more closely.
3. Grafted oak trees grow faster and maintain the characteristics of the parent plant. In our spiritual journey, being adopted in Christ allows us to grow steadily and consistently, and reflect His image in our actions and character.

Just like the oak tree's deep roots provide stability and strength, being adopted in Christ can give us the resilience and support we need to face life's challenges.

LEAN

How have these thoughts of being adopted in Christ impacted your walk with Jesus? Do you walk in faith or in fear? Do you feel encouraged?

PRAY

Thank you, God, for making me your child. Remind me that no matter what I face in life, you are with me, encouraging, guiding, and protecting. Help me to shine your light and love. Thank You for showing Your unconditional love to me through adoption. Amen

Karen Brewster

LISTEN

Ephesians 2:10

LEARN

One day the great artist Michelangelo was pushing a heavy rock up a small incline to his work area so he could do some sculpting. A neighbor watched him for over an hour as he worked to get this rock in place. Finally, the neighbor asked, "Michelangelo, why do you labor so hard over that ugly, heavy piece of rock?" Michelangelo said, "Because there is an angel inside that wants to come out." It is rumored that as he chiseled away for two years he would yell at the marble, "David, come out!" Eventually David did emerge, and we know him today as one of Michelangelo's greatest masterpieces.

The Greek word Paul uses for workmanship in Ephesians 2:10 is *Poema*, from which we derive the word poem. Think of the most beautiful poem you can imagine. Maybe you are thinking of the works of John Keats, Robert Frost or Maya Angelou. Now drink this in: YOU are God's painstakingly created poem, far exceeding the beauty of any classical work. You are God's masterful creation. You are divine poetry in motion. You ... are His masterpiece. You are God's magnum opus. His best and highest creation.

LEAN

Believe it or not, an important question in loving one's neighbor is, "How do I view myself?" Why is this important? Because our view of ourselves is primarily based on how we think God sees us.

It's so critical to our Front Yard Mission that we get our identity straight. Without a proper Christ-centered identity we will never be free to love our neighbor. And yet how we view ourselves is a bit of a balancing act.

Rick Warren said, "True humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less." Let's face it ... you are a living paradox, an oxymoron, an enigma. And the mystery is this: you are not able. However, Christ in you is able. You are unworthy, but you are not worthless. You were a cracked jar of clay, yet you have been made new and now hold an unspeakable treasure.

PRAY

Father God, I choose to believe the truth about how You see me. I thank You that I can hope in the future and believe in the good destiny that You have for me. You have a vision for my future. Help me to live a fruitful life now and overflow with Your love to others. Give me a greater understanding of who You are and who You created me to be. I want to know You on a deeper level, and I don't want anything to hinder my relationship with You. In the name of Jesus, Amen

Jonathan Weibel

WEEK SIX I AM A GLORIOUS MESS

Welcome to week six of our Poiema Project. If I could describe this week's theme in four words I would simply say, "Don't you dare quit." In I Corinthians 4, Paul says that we have a treasure in our jars of clay. The jars of clay refer to the transient nature of our bodies and our lives. But you have a treasure in those jars of clay. There is an unsurpassable power at work within you that you cannot even begin to fathom. You may be on the verge of an experience that could develop your heart into the heart of a hero, so don't you dare quit.

Perhaps at the moment, it seems like your life is a mess. That may be true. You may be in the midst of a mess, but glory is coming. So don't quit. God is actually shaping us for glory. He uses people, circumstances and events to shape us for his glory. Our bodies/lives are containers for his glory and he is shaping us from glory to glory. One of the best exercises I've done to uncover the glory in the midst of my mess is a post-it-note timeline. If you haven't done one, I encourage you to go to our resource page, click the link and let my friend Terry lead you through it. And then this week...

- It might be time to get out of a me-identity-focus and go for a prayer walk. Or if it's too cold, a prayer-drive! Ask God to show you the mess and the glory in your neighborhood or on your hashtag.
- It's CWOW Sunday, so the prayer-walk is a great CWOW front-yard mission opportunity. Think of it as a glory-walk! But you can also find a "Glorious Mess" message on our CWOW video.
- Both of the above are at calvarysc.org/resources.

LISTEN

Isaiah 64:6,8

LEARN

Only God can take a kid who grew up amidst abuse, poverty and a cycle of family brokenness and free him from sinful anger to be a servant and voice for the least of these. If you would have told that kid he'd become a pastor, a leader, a voice of God's inclusiveness- I never would have believed you. God has given me a passion and gift to see those who are considered the least of these and share His love for all. The message He is sharing through me is that everyone has a seat at His table. He is a Lord and Savior who eats with sinners, brings light, love and new identity to those who accept him as their Lord and Savior. I have learned to embrace how God has created me — To lead fully transparent in my shortcomings, share my past to relate with others, and to encourage others, to enter the darkness to be His light without fear, to love those whom the world considers unlovable. I am so thankful and amazed at how God chose me and people like me to confound the world and grow His kingdom.

LEAN

Embrace the mess that you are and trust God to make beauty from ashes, to wash your dirty rags and make them white as snow, to take your insufficiency and replace it with grace that is abundantly sufficient. Trust that He is molding and making you into the person He has created you to be, a person that moment by moment He is making to look more like His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Great Physician who has come for those who recognize their desperate need for healing. He is the one who sees value in those who reside on the island of misfit toys.

PRAY

Lord, we come to You with our brokenness, our flaws and failures, with surrender and obedience giving ourselves over to You to use as You see fit. We trust in You. You are all we need even if You are the only One we have. You are the way, the truth, and the life. Thank You for allowing us to join You on mission. You don't need us but You want us. Thank you Lord, Amen!

Bill Ewing

LISTEN

Psalm 139:1–4

LEARN

My insides have been entangled in family dysfunction — discord, division, and false peace. I tried to rescue, please and protect, often walking on eggshells, silently agreeing to things I came to regret.

Following another conflict, I was at the shore longing for God's guidance and presence. The beach was covered with broken shells, remnants of what was. As I peered into a split conch shell, the Lord revealed my divided heart; the spiral interior mirrored my mind, repeating narratives. I confessed, surrendered and believed God would heal me. I also asked Him to show me His glory.

The next morning, the beach was completely clear. Mile upon mile, NOTHING. "Wow, God that's amazing," I thought. Then turning back, astounded. I see a large, unbroken conch shell, glistening, beautiful. He held me in that moment. His grace, Word, and good counsel renew my mind and change my heart.

LEAN

Are you running? Hiding? Afraid? Tell Him; He already knows. Trust Him to do the work.

PRAY

Loving Father, thank You for Your unfailing love, transforming grace and healing power! If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast.

LISTEN

2 Corinthians 12:9

LEARN

It's easy to read scripture and see all of the amazing things that followers of Jesus accomplished. When you stop and think about their lives, it's also really easy to see how messed up so many of them were. David was an adulterer and murderer, Moses was a murderer, Gideon was a coward filled with doubts and questions, and Peter denied ever knowing Christ. Yet through it all, God used them. Through it all, God's love for them never diminished, never changed, and was never questioned. In my past, I've allowed my mistakes to affect how I thought God saw me. Because how could He use me when I've done so many stupid things? How could He use me when I've said no to so many of the things He was pushing me to do? What I've found as I've continued to be imperfect is that God uses our weaknesses to show off His power in our lives and our world. God doesn't promise to take away our mess, at least not in this life. But he does promise that His grace is sufficient. He does promise to give us life and to help us experience freedom.

LEAN

For a lot of us, it's hard to accept that we are weak. It's hard to admit that we are messy. It feels weird, but take some time to thank God for our weakness. Thank Him for His grace that is sufficient to cover all of our weaknesses. And take time to repent. Confess the places where you've fallen short and ask God to help you run in the other direction!

PRAY

Jesus, thank You for using us to bring You glory. Thank You for all the examples of using broken people to bring You glory. And thank You that your grace is sufficient. Forgive us for the places we've fallen short. Forgive us for the times we relied on our own strength. And Jesus, thank you for using a glorious mess like me.

LISTEN

Exodus 4:1-17, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

LEARN

Moses is a great example of God using an imperfect person to glorify Himself. When Moses encounters God at the burning bush and is called to go to Egypt, he's full of "why me's" and "what ifs." Then, after all of God's reassurances, Moses still says send someone else! He's focused on his lack of qualifications instead of on the power of the God who calls him.

As a musician and worship leader, I used to get easily distracted by how I performed on any given day. My voice would falter or my fingers hit wrong notes, or I wouldn't feel mentally and emotionally engaged like I wanted to. Like Moses, in those moments I'd ask God isn't there someone better for this? My gaze was turned inward, blocking me from experiencing the grace of God and the peace that comes with humble surrender to Him. But as He grows my ability to shift my gaze to Him, my worship and life become less defined by my capabilities or what people think of me and more defined by gratitude and joy in knowing that God can and will do whatever He wants to, on my best and worst days. He doesn't want to use perfect people to bring Him glory, just hearts humbly and joyfully surrendered to whatever He wants to do.

LEAN

Every morning for a week, start the day with this short prayer (or a similar one of your own): "God, thank You that You are in control. Thank You for Your grace in using me just as I am, while continually renewing me each day. Help my gaze to shift back to You when it focuses too much on things around me. I surrender my day to You with joy and humility. Amen."

PRAY

Lord, we are broken people, but You delight in using us as we are. I pray for tangible revelations of your grace in the places where we're fixated on our inadequacies and mistakes. Open our eyes to who You are and where You're at work!

Christine Schafer

LISTEN

Romans 8:26-28

LEARN

Have you ever made a plan that you thought was perfect? You start trying to do all the right things to make it happen. Then somehow along the way, the plan turns into a giant disaster. We have an idea of how life is supposed to turn out, but then it turns upside down, sideways, and looks nothing like you thought it would.

Currently, I'm in the midst of the wreckage of what feels like an impossible-to-fix life situation. It feels like the world is swirling around me, and I don't know which way is up. It is this situation that has brought me to the end of myself, where some days I don't know if I can hold on anymore, yet I know, God is strong enough to hold on to me. There are days when I don't have the words to pray anymore, but I know that God still hears the cries of my heart. There are days when I feel like a huge failure and an absolute disaster, but I know in the mess, He IS working all things together for His good. If nothing else, He is drawing my heart closer and closer to His. Despite the circumstances, I feel a peace like I have never felt before. I am growing in ways that I never thought possible. While I am still praying for breakthrough, I also am learning how to be broken and beautiful at the same time.

LEAN

Where do you see God at work in you in your past or current trials?
Sometime today thank God for using the messy situations in your life to bring you closer to Him.

PRAY

Lord, I thank You, that You are with us in the midst of the storms of life. I pray that You will help Your child to believe that You are at work even when we can't see it. I thank You for a peace that goes beyond human understanding. I pray that You will help Your child trust the messes of life to You.

Amy Sliman

LISTEN

2 Corinthians 4:7-17; 2 Corinthians 12:9

LEARN

Pastor Dan refers to us as a glorious mess. Of course, I had to know what that really means. Mess (n): a dirty, untidy, or disordered condition; a state of embarrassing confusion; an unpleasant or difficult situation; a jumble. Check, check and check. I have lived and felt each part of that definition — times when I felt too dirty to show up, too untidy to be loved, too confused to plot my next step. So why in the world does God not fear that my mess will taint His reputation? When I've been flattened and lying on the ground looking up, I've heard Him say: "You know that I'm a Savior, right? You know that I'm a Rescuer and Redeemer? You know that your messes don't scare me one little bit?" The most dangerous times in my life have been when shame caused me to hide my mess; when I ran from the workshop and fled from the Savior's gaze. It's not the mess that's the problem, it's what I do with it. He KNEW that we would have trouble (John 16:33). He knew that life would afflict, squeeze, and make us weak and weary (2 Corinthians 4:17). But over and over He says: "Come!"

It's stunning that the Lord chooses us as the containers for His glory, such clay that we are. It's humbling to be a jar of clay. My flesh would prefer to be sturdier, more finished-looking, but like Rahab and Gideon and Peter, my fragile mess becomes a showcase for the redemptive work of my Dad. If I'll just show up, He welcomes me into his workshop and whispers: "This, even this, is something we can work with! Come with me." (Philippians 1:6)

LEAN

What part of you or piece of your story is long overdue to be handed over to the Father? He doesn't panic or shame. No mess is too big. Freedom awaits.

PRAY

Thank You for the assurance that we are loved with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3) and that nothing can separate us from Your love (Romans 8:31-39). Would You silence the Enemy's voice that makes us run and hide, and amplify Your voice of welcome and rescue?

Becky Martin

LISTEN

John 16: 32-33

LEARN

Everything in life always seems to come with some level of “mess.” For me, it ranges a whole spectrum: from the anxiousness of seeing both of my parents undergo surgeries within days of each other, to silly things like the irrational irritation of an unannounced guest seeing my house in its natural state — an utter disaster. While this physical description of mess is obvious, I often wonder if someone were to view my thoughts and inner dialogue, the way they can view my home, what they would think. What does God think?

Next to the couch, multiple baskets of washed but unfolded clothes, could be viewed as my physical insecurities. Is that another gray hair? Are my jeans getting tighter? In the kitchen we can see the mountain of my emotional turmoil, in my overflowing sink of dirty dishes — do I visit my grandparents enough? Should I take the prescribed anxiety medication? Will I ever get pregnant? Am I really qualified to write this devotional? A tumbleweed of dog hair on the stairs — a nasty thought about how moronic my coworkers are. An unidentifiable stain in the carpet — a shameful secret.

No matter how big our mess — physical, mental or emotional, God loves us and nothing will change that. Cling to His mercy and grace and you will find that even in the messiest seasons of your life, He is always by your side and has a plan and a purpose for the good.

LEAN

It is true that we are our own worst critics. Write down 5 things that are weighing on your heart. Then try to observe them through God's eyes. What would He say to you about them?

PRAY

Lord, help me to see myself as You see me; to forgive myself like You've forgiven me; and to love myself like You love me. To know that even in my weakest moments when I feel like the weight of the world is on my shoulders, that You are always with me and will never forsake me. Help me to "clean up" the messes that I can control and give me discernment and faith to give fully to You the ones I can't. Amen.

Samantha Elliot

WEEK SEVEN I AM CALLED

Welcome to our final week of 50 days. I hope, in fact I am praying that this last week is your best week. And this week our truth statement is, "I am called." You may not think that you are "all-that" but you were created to bear the image of God. Hear me, you may not think you're all that, but you were created to bear the image of God. And it is an amazing thing to discover and uncover the image of God within us. It is a level of greatness that so many people miss. Let me ask you a question: What is your picture of greatness? Some of us look at certain external measures of greatness and despair because we think we will never qualify. But God looks at the heart and calls out to your heart, "come join me in a great purpose".

You are called. For the last few weeks we've been dreaming a bit of what God is doing in me, but there is also something that He wants to do through me. There is unique calling, but there is also a calling common to us all. He's calling us to be his friends. He's calling us to serve others. More than anything, He is calling us to apprentice our life to Jesus, to live and love like Christ. Not only to live and love like Him, but to actually surrender and follow Him.

This week is all about our calling, so as we move into this week,

- Go calvarysc.org/resources and find the resource on writing a biblical purpose statement. Give it a shot.
- Finish strong with the daily devotions, sharing with someone what the Lord is having you lean into.
- Finally, following our calling often requires a step of faith. Is there a step of faith that God is waiting for you to take?

LISTEN

Hebrews 13:20-21

LEARN

There was a time in my life when I would pray that God would give me a calling, a passion, or a purpose. I wanted to be used by God for something BIG. As I have grown in my faith I have realized that my calling is to do whatever He calls me to do, period. In different seasons of my life that has looked different; raising our children, being a caregiver for my mom, youth ministry, ladies ministry, recovery ministry, homeless ministry, etc. But ultimately it is to be on mission with Him wherever He is working. Most times I feel like I am not equipped and inadequate. I think someone out there must be better or more qualified than me, so there have been times when I know He was nudging me and I ignored it because of my insecurities. But God sees me and He wants to use me even with my inadequacies. The above verses remind me that He will equip me to do the work He is calling me to do if I am willing to be used by Him.

LEAN

Do you feel Him nudging you toward being on mission with Him? Do you feel inadequate? So many people in the Bible felt the same way: Moses, David, etc. The truth is we are inadequate alone, but with HIM all things are possible and He will equip you for every good work.

PRAY

God, thank You for calling us to be on mission with You. We are trusting that since You have called us, You will equip us. Thank You for seeing our flaws and insecurities but using us anyway. Amen.

LISTEN

Psalm 84: 5-7

LEARN

During October, while I was walking a remote area on the eastern shore, a storm raged in the Atlantic, and a king tide brought incredible surges of water. A delicate butterfly fluttering above the mist of the waves caught my eye. Then there was another, and another!

The migration generation of monarchs travel some 2,500+ miles, amid difficulties, go to where they have never been before, and they weigh less than a single paperclip. Similarly, our spiritual growth journey is filled with adversity and trials.

Enter the Valley of Baca: weeping + drought. Grief over death, panic in diagnosis, pain from a loved one who refuses to reconcile, sorrow acknowledging sin, to name a few. During these times, no matter the outcome, God's strength is on tap. When we choose to believe, trust and rely on Him with our hearts set on a course to his presence, it changes everything!

LEAN

How can your strength-to-strength testimony encourage another today?

PRAY

Loving Father, help me to trust in you completely on this precious life journey. I praise you for being my refuge and strength, an ever-present help in my troubles. You alone are the strength of my heart and my portion forever. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

LISTEN

1 Corinthians 10:31

LEARN

“What is God calling me to do?” This question has been floating through my mind the past few months. I started college with an idea of the degree and job I wanted post-graduation, but there have been some unexpected hurdles in my plan. Naturally, this has left me doubting that I am really on the track God has for me. So, like any other 18- to 22-year-old, my worries and fears about the future start to grow. This worrying and doubting is common for a lot of people, regardless of where they are in life.

In the midst of this, I watched both of my parents’ transition into a job they enjoy and where they can glorify God in every moment. Their journey has shaped my own views on my life’s purpose. One thing I’ve kept in mind as a result of witnessing this and from studying Scripture is that ultimately God wants whatever I do to be for His glory and to point to Him and His love. Overall, I can rest in Him knowing that no matter where I end up in four years, if I am loving others, I am glorifying Him and fulfilling my purpose as a Christian.

LEAN

Take some time to write out a reminder of your God-given purpose on a sticky note. Put it in a place you will see it daily as a reminder.

PRAY

Dear Lord, thank You that we can rest in You knowing the purpose of our lives is grounded in loving You. Guide us with Your light on how to live out our calling better. We love You and we want to glorify You God. Amen.

Hannah Unger

LISTEN

Zechariah 4:10, Proverbs 3:5-6, Luke 1:46-48

LEARN

There's no doubt that I have a purpose for living. I have found myself time and again in situations where I didn't think I'd make it another day if I continued my destructive habits. It wasn't until I had an encounter with God that I realized HE had a purpose for my life. The FINAL time that I landed myself in a hopeless situation I had sensed that this might've been one too many mess-ups. However, when I woke up the next morning I knew I couldn't mess around and test God anymore. My surrender was me coming to the end of who I had built myself up to be, and instead relying on God to show me who He created me to be. Continued surrender, in His mercy, allowed me to regularly see and hear from God. I allow His convictions rather than my preferences to guide my decisions. I've chosen to trust Him in all things, leaving what isn't mine at the altar and knowing He will return it even better than I had left it.

Only through continuing to walk in that full repentance is my identity now hidden in Christ. As I allow that new identity in Christ to possess me, I am able to see what my God-given role as a Godly woman and mother really meant. "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant." This is my life, I am a servant of God. I am fulfilled and I have a purpose! DO NOT DESPISE THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS. To some, the calling to be a Godly woman and Godly mother may seem too small and insignificant to be considered a calling, but to me, it's our only hope.

LEAN

Seek the Kingdom of God above ALL else, get fitted into your place in the temple He's building, and then let Him lead you on the path to greater light and life; revealing your calling.

PRAY

From Paul's prayers to the Thessalonians

So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of His call. May He give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do. Then the name of our Lord Jesus will be honored because of the way you live, and you will be honored along with Him. This is all made possible because of the grace of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Amy Johnstonbaugh

LISTEN

2 Timothy 1:3-14

LEARN

Jobs and callings are not always the same thing. A job is what you do. A calling is who you are. A job puts food on the table. A calling puts purpose on display. You can have many jobs in your life, but God has His calling on you for a very important purpose.

When I was conducting college and church choirs, my job was to teach my students about the expression of the human experience through sound and to train them to live that expression in a concert. My calling was to live out who God created and equipped me to be. As I have done soul work to help me live out who I am, I have discovered that despite the job or situation in which I found myself, I am naturally building caring and loving communities by inspiring and empowering authentic relationships. I truly believe that God has put me in places where I can make a difference in the lives of others in this way.

Do I always live out that calling? Unfortunately, no. There are times when fear does not allow me to follow through on my calling. Why does fear prevent me from being what I have been created to be? When my eyes turn toward myself, I lose the power to live out my calling for the benefit of others. God calls me to live out power, love, and self-control because that is what He provides. Living out a calling is both powerful and loving. Your calling is how you will make a real difference in the world.

LEAN

Ask God to show you how you have lived out His calling. Maybe you did not even realize it, but God's design of you is precisely what you need to do precisely what He has called you to do. Rejoice that God has made you the way you are.

PRAY

Father, show me the calling that You have placed on my life. Give me the power to live it out and make a difference for the people around me. Let me be a reflection of You throughout my days so that You receive the glory in whatever situation I am in.

Alan Rieck

LISTEN

Romans 8:28

LEARN

As I child, I spent a large portion of my childhood at my grandparents' house, where I would spend hours watching Contemporary Christian music videos. My grandmother was and still is the worship leader in her church and always is singing or humming as she works around the house. If there is something weighing on our hearts, she always has the perfect song to sing with us. Music can speak for us, when we don't have the words ourselves.

Now, 30-some years later, I also sing on our worship team, but it took me a long time to stop fighting God on it. Having never sung solo publicly, and being that I am very introverted, I thought God was crazy and that I was losing my mind for even considering that calling. I tried to ignore it. I tried to rationalize that there was someone more faithful, more charismatic, but it turns out God knows more than I do. He doesn't bless us with gifts and then allow us to dismiss the gifts because of our insecurities. He calls us to glorify Him through them. To be faithful stewards of his grace. What God calls you to, likely won't be something you think you can do or feel prepared for. He will challenge you, but it's always with a purpose. Singing is not something I would ever have picked for myself but I love that my grandmother and I can share something so special as being chosen by God.

LEAN

If you already know what you've been called to do but you're fighting it, let go of whatever is holding you back and let God take control. If you don't know just yet, pray for wisdom and He will make it clear one day soon!

PRAY

Lord, I come before You seeking Your wisdom and guidance. Give me ears to hear and eyes to see the unique purpose You are calling me to. Give me the courage to follow where you lead. Amen.

Samantha Elliot

LISTEN

The sheep hear His voice, and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out.

John 10:3 (NIV)

... to all who have been called by God the Father, who loves you and keeps you safe in the care of Jesus Christ.

May God give you more and more mercy, peace, and love.

Jude vs. 1 (NLT)

LEARN

I never would have imagined reaching my 50s having never been married. The 20-something me would have DIED if you had told me this is how my life would be at this point ... But God!

I cannot imagine a life more full or a calling, a church or a community I'd rather have than where He has brought me. The Good Shepherd sweetly blesses my life in ways I never could have thought to ask for. When I live with my heart close to His heart and my thoughts saturated in His Word — that's when I hear His voice. That's the place I want to stay. Whether you're single, married, single again, it doesn't matter. What matters is hearing the voice of your Good Shepherd and knowing you are loved and called.

LEAN

A favorite song of mine that brings so much joy is Goodness of God. I love to sing the chorus over my life ... the good and the bad, the past and the future, the things that look the way I thought they would and the things that feel like loss. Because I know He is GOOD in all of it — all of it can fuel a heart of joy.

PRAY

Sing or speak the chorus of Goodness of God as a declaration of praise to the Lord:

*"All my life You have been faithful. All my life You have been so, so good. With every breath that I am able I will sing of the Goodness of God!"**

Kimberly Dick

*Songwriters: Ben Fielding / Brian Johnson / Edward Martin Cash / Jason Ingram / Jenn Johnson Goodness of God lyrics © Capitol CMG Publishing

FINAL DAY I AM GOD'S JAR

Welcome to the final day of our 50-day journey. You've made it. I hope it was identity-forming and life-changing. While not every practice from this journey will make it into the regular rhythm of your daily spiritual life, let me encourage you to not quickly surrender all the rhythms. Specifically, let me encourage you to continue to consistently go back to the "Who Am I" lists or the card we gave you. There is something quite powerful about letting our hearts, souls and minds soak in these truths.

Take some time today and ask God to fill you with His Spirit. It's never a bad thing to ask for more of His Spirit. Ask Him to show you anything in your life that is keeping you from more of His Spirit. And then ask Him again!

One last thing, take a moment to go to our resource page at calvarysc.org/resources, and find the 50-Day God-story Report. Could you take a few moments and answer a few questions in order to share a bit of the God-story or what He's been doing in your life during these 50 days?

There's a link on the resource page for the report.

Thank you so much for taking this journey with us!

LISTEN

2 Corinthians 4:6-18

LEARN

When Paul calls us to fix our gaze on unseen eternal realities, he's simply asking us to believe that what God says about reality is true, even when we don't see it. He's asking us to believe that the harvest is plentiful when we look at our neighborhood; to believe that our battle is not against flesh and blood even when others attack us. He's asking you to believe that you are His kid, covered in His love, even when you feel unseen and believe the darkness will not prevail; even when hope seems unreasonable. He's asking you to believe that you are, in fact, say this to yourself, "I am God's Jar." You are God's jar and your life is filled with a great treasure. That's Paul's message in 2 Corinthians 4:7. "But we have this treasure in jars of clay ..."

You are God's jar. And what is a jar? Most jars are defined by what they contain, water bottles, a flower vase, a cookie jar, a fine bottle of wine. So, what's in your jar? What is the treasure? It's the glory of God coming alive in your life. It's the Spirit making you more like Jesus. It's the resurrection power of Christ let loose in your life. Ultimately, it's the life of Jesus in you. When it comes to your life, God is passionately obsessed with shaping your jar for Jesus. He wants you to become so full of Jesus that when people look at the container of your life, all they can see is His heart.

But take a deep breath and listen. Your jar full of Jesus doesn't happen without the crucible. It doesn't happen without getting shaped on the potter's wheel. We want change without the crucible. We want glory without the pain. We want resurrection without death. But that's not how it works. "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."

LEAN

Just imagine holding that crucible in your hands and offering it to Jesus. Breathe in resurrection life, breathe in future glory, breathe in his Spirit ... and just say, "I give this to You, Jesus. Do everything in me that You need to do, so that You can do everything through me that You want to do. You are the potter. I am the clay. Shape me for you."

PRAY

Father, shape me for Your glory. Jesus, fill me with Your Spirit. Spirit, fill me with Your power. I am Your jar. Do everything You need to do, in me, so that You can do everything You want to do through me. Amen.

Dan Nold

WHO AM I?

You're identity is received, not achieved.

It is not what you do, but what Jesus has done.

God is not keeping a record of wrongs.

If you are a believer in Christ Jesus, you can state:

I AM A NEW CREATION

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation,
The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

I AM IN CHRIST

For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:3

I AM CHOSEN OF GOD, HOLY AND DEARLY LOVED

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate
hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,

Colossians 3:12

We know, dear brothers and sisters, that God loves you
and has chosen you to be his own people.

1 Thessalonians 1:4

I AM A MEMBER OF CHRIST'S BODY

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

1 Corinthians 12:27

for we are members of his body.

Ephesians 5:30

I AM GOD'S CHILD

But to all who believed him and accepted him,
He gave the right to become children of God.

John 1:12

I AM CHRIST'S FRIEND

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his
master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything
that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

John 15:15

I AM FREE

You have been set free from sin
and have become slaves to righteousness.

Romans 6:18

I AM GOD'S WORKMANSHIP

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works,
which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10

I AM A SLAVE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to
righteousness.

Romans 6:18

I HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED — COMPLETELY FORGIVEN AND MADE RIGHTEOUS

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 5:1

I AM FREE FOREVER FROM CONDEMNATION

Therefore, there is now no condemnation
for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

Since I have died, I no longer live for myself, but for Christ. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

2 Corinthians 5:14, 15

I HAVE BEEN GIVEN A SPIRIT OF POWER, LOVE AND SELF-DISCIPLINE

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid,
but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

2 Timothy 1:7

I MAY APPROACH GOD WITH BOLDNESS, FREEDOM AND CONFIDENCE

In him and through faith in him we may approach God
with freedom and confidence.

Ephesians 3:12

