

# REDEEMED



WOMEN'S  
*Redeemed*  
SERIES 2018

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Here at *Project Healing*, we believe stories are powerful. This series is inspired by Psalm 107:2 where the Psalmist says, "*Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story.*" To be redeemed means to be bought back, recovered, and restored.

Redeemed is a series of testimonial devotionals written by God fearing passionate women who have overcome heart wrenching challenges and have been redeemed with purpose. Here you will find a piece of a woman's story and their personal experience with God as redeemer and His redemptive power. The hope is for you to be encouraged and empowered as you read to walk boldly, live loved, and realize your own God-given purpose.

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*Tell Your Story*

# Redeemed

## PART ONE

She is the graduate admissions counselor at Nyack College and holds a master's degree in mental health counseling. She resides in the Bronx with her three beautiful children and has a passion and love for Jesus that is infectious! Her transparency allows others to see Christ in her and moves others to authentic vulnerability. She desires to minister to young people and has a drive to let the truth of Christ's love be known. On any given day, you can catch her reading her favorite book with a hot cup of coffee. Meet Chastity and welcome our guest of honor to the very FIRST guest devotional of this women's redeemed series. . .

***“Don’t call me Naomi, she responded. Instead call me Mara, for the almighty has made life very bitter for me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me home empty. Why call me Naomi when the Lord has called me to suffer and the almighty has sent such tragedy upon me?” Ruth 1:20-21***

How many of us can say we have felt exactly like Naomi here? I know when I read this, I instantly related to how she felt. So, you can have an understanding as to why she had been bitter, Naomi had her husband taken in death as well as her two sons. She returned to her hometown empty, bitter, angry, and hurting. Naomi had made her husband and children her everything. Like Naomi, I too had made someone my everything, my husband. When he walked out almost 11 months ago, it felt as if my heart had been ripped out. I felt incomplete and empty. My eyes had been so swollen from all the tears I had shed. I was bitter and could not understand why the Lord would allow me to suffer this way. Although I was broken, hurting, and empty I knew I was indeed in need of the Lord's healing. The Lord used the pain I was in to draw me in. It was in my pain I ran to Him. The Lord did not want my husband to be my everything because truthfully it was never my spouse that was supposed to make me whole, just as Naomi was not meant to be made whole by her family.

Truthfully speaking, my spouse for many years was my god. What was I going to do without him? At least in the beginning these were my thoughts. The truth was God desired to heal, fill, and make me whole for a long time. God knew what Naomi needed although she at the time may not have known. So, in His goodness. He provided her with someone to walk the journey with her. The Lord provided Ruth, her daughter in-law to stick closely beside her and she did, although Naomi may not have been the most joyful person. The Lord has done the same for me in this season I am in.

The name Ruth means Friend, companion. That is exactly what she was to Naomi. The Lord brought a friend in the time when I needed one the most. See, Ruth was Naomi's redeemer. She was the one the Lord used to return to Naomi what had been taken. What was returned to Naomi may not have been in the way she expected. However, is that not how God so often works? Through Ruth, Naomi was taken care of, provided for, given a grandchild and gained a daughter. Naomi's healing came through Ruth. See, my healing is not coming through the way I thought it would come.

God is doing it His way. The way that is BEST.

In my journey of pain, suffering and moments of sorrow he has brought me a friend, a sister. When I felt I had nothing, he brought this young woman to listen to me, pray me through, encourage and challenge me in new ways. This woman has walked along side me when I did not feel the most lovable and had so little to give. It is within this friendship; God has redeemed me just as it was Ruth for Naomi. See this friendship is what the Lord used to redeem the things that were lost within me, the forgotten things. I have always known that God had a calling upon my life and to a certain extent how he wanted to use me, but it was through this friendship that I was reminded. There were certain things this friend had that I did not have that I needed. It has been through her that God has begun to develop me.

Just as God knew what Naomi needed, He also knew exactly what I needed. My redemption has not been overnight. It has been a process and I praise God I am getting there.

When you are empty, bitter and full of sorrow, please be reminded that our God does see, you are NOT forgotten, and HE desires to make you whole, redeeming all that has been lost. May you my darling sister be made complete this day in HIS love. May healing come in the deep places of your heart and may you be fully willing to surrender it ALL withholding nothing. Step into Him (Christ).

# Redeemed

## PART TWO

She lives in Tegucigalpa, Honduras and is a student of management and social development. She works as a translator for missionaries that serve the impoverished people in Honduras. You can find her on any given day worshipping God on the altar, at the movies, or serving the underserved communities in Honduras. She has a heart that loves on people deeply and a joy that is infectious. Meet Seydy and welcome our guest of honor to part TWO of our guest devotional of this women's Redeemed Series. . .

***"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11 NIV***

I want to thank God for this opportunity I have been given to be able to tell the wonders He has done in my life. By which He took me from where I was; I owe him honor and glory because He truly is a God of wonders. Many times, we cannot understand why we go through so many things in our lives. We believe God is not with us; that he has left us, and we only look at the problem we have gone through or are going through. We think the biggest problem is ours and we think we have gone through the worst problem. We say, "My problem is too big, and I have gone through the worst." But it really is not like that. We think this way because we are more focused on our situations, and we do not look at the problems of others. Nevertheless, God is the only one that can take us out from a place that we ourselves cannot get out alone. I can tell you I have seen the hand of God in my life. I will tell you something that happened in my life, and I want this testimony to be a great blessing for the lives of young people and women who have experienced situations of sexual abuse.

When I was 8-10 years old, I lived with my stepfather and my mother. Since those years, he began to abuse me and would give me money to do so. When I turned 11, he destroyed my childhood and stole my innocence. Around this time, I had to leave my house and lived with my grandmother because I was afraid he would return to my house. But while I was there, I was also abused by my cousin. I didn't know what to do. I was afraid to tell the truth. Thanks to people I knew they gave me the courage to say it. But when I told my brother, he didn't believe me. He even disciplined me for telling the truth. After this, I was separated from my family and placed in an orphanage. I didn't like it because the girls there would hit me, so I had reason to escape. Although I ran away and was homeless, I came across someone I knew, and he wondered what I was doing. I told him I escaped from the orphanage because I was afraid to be there. I realized that God put him on the road because I stood with his family for about a month, and they showed me love and affection. They took care of me. But the orphanage found out I escaped. Because I was a minor and his family could get into trouble, they took me to the orphanage again. When I tried to escape again, God placed a woman in my path to put me in another orphanage. When I arrived, I cried and cried. But the missionaries who were there told me if after 10 days, you still don't like it here, we will take you back. After 10 days, I didn't want to leave because I felt protected by these missionaries. But as I got older, I didn't want to live. I wanted to die because I constantly remembered that my stepfather had destroyed me. He had taken my childhood. I just wanted to die because I thought the sexual abuse was my fault. Because I took the money from him, I felt I was to blame but I didn't know. I spent 9 years in that orphanage and left when I was 20 years old. Although I was a Christian and was walking with God, I always lamented what had happened in my life. But the Lord would tell me, "I threw the past to the bottom of the sea, and I do not remember the past things." Every time I told my testimony I cried but it was because I did not let God into my heart to heal me. Now I tell my story and I do not cry because I know God has freed me and has set me free. Because of Him, I am telling my testimony. If it weren't for Him, I would've been on the streets prostituting myself. But because of His grace and His love, I am standing. If it weren't for God, I don't know what would've been of my life. But I thank God for my life now and for my family's. Now, my dream is to help young people and girls who have been abused. My desire is to tell them they are not alone, that God is with them, and that God is their only savior. I hope you understand everything happens for a purpose. God has something prepared for your life. Sometimes these things happen so that we can help others but God wants to heal our hearts first so we can help those people who need it. This is my testimony and all the honor and glory is to God. Do not ask God "why?" but ask "for what purpose have I gone through that?" because He will give you the answer to the purpose of your life. Use your testimony to bless others.

# Redeemed

## PART THREE

She is an adjunct professor at Nyack College and has her own private practice. When she walks into a room, she commands a presence that speaks volumes into her genuine authenticity. She teaches with compassion, vigor, and an incredible sense of humor. Her natural inclination leads her to invest into her students and into people with love and bold truths. Her love for the Lord is apparent in how she treats people meeting them exactly where they are yet investing into their potential. Meet Michele and welcome our guest of honor to part three of our guest devotional of this women's redeemed series. . .

*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.  
Genesis 50:20 NIV*

For sure, God is a God of miracles, and some people expect big fireworks when the events transpire. I've learned to see God in everything and as a result He has comforted me, and I've been able to re-frame many events in my own life that the enemy surely would have used to destroy me.

So how come? Why would the enemy want to stifle me and destroy me? I'll tell you why! Because of the above noted scripture. The Lord has deemed me worthy as His creation to be used as an instrument to facilitate love, compassion, and point to him. I am eternally grateful for His mercy on my life and therefore could not choose any other way than to serve Him and seek Him.

Life for me initiated with the enemy's plan to destroy my appreciation for my earthly father through my parents' divorce when I was young. You see, broken homes are one of the enemy's ways to destroy our view of authority, submission, and reliance on our heavenly father. However, in my instance my father became a Christian and despite their separation, my parents were able to work together on my behalf and my father continued to pray for us as he developed his own walk. My mother would serve to be an example of strength, resilience, and ability to endure many difficult times.

My own commitment to Christ would not come until I was about 16 years of age. During this time, I was on fire for Christ. I would then graduate, attend college, date, and fall away from my walk. Yet the Lord was faithful despite my wavering. He ushered me back to Him, I met my husband, and experienced trials that arose within my family. The Lord would provide a refuge during this time which would sustain me during a complex time in my life.

I endured oversights for promotion during my career with NYC Early Intervention and later make the decision to attend Nyack Colleges –AGSC and pursue my degree in Christian Counseling. I believe it was all the Lord's unfailing love for me. He would not give me what I wanted but always provided what I needed. I would work in a secular environment wondering if God was using me in my counseling work. Whenever I would question how I could be of service, He would provide opportunities with clients seeking direction regarding their own relationships with the Lord. It would serve as a reminder to me He was still at work in my life.

About 1 year ago, I made the decision to open my own private practice in Christian Counseling and was approached by a long-time mentor of mine, Dr. Marcia Lucas, concerning teaching with Nyack College as an Adjunct Professor. I can't explain how rewarding this part of my journey has been. In spite of the chaotic state of our nation, do not be distracted by it all. God is moving, opening doors for His obedient servants, and those He has called to serve. You may not see where the Lord is taking you but trust He is moving and wants to draw you close to Him.

I've learned through the years the Lord hears our most intimate cries. He knows our sorrows, our worries, and our struggles. He is fearless to meet us in the depth of that area and hold our hand UNCONDITIONALLY as we grow in the fullness of whom He sees us as. He does not view us in the moment but in our fullness; the restored and completed work He has created us to be to be a witness to the world of His REDEEMING LOVE. I am grateful my earthly father continued to pray for my salvation.

But I am most appreciative of my heavenly Father's unwavering promise to restore what the enemy attempted to destroy.

And so beloved in your place of brokenness; whether it be divorce, incest, poverty, poor self-worth, anger, rage, anxiety, depression, or even if you "just don't feel enough" - know you are His, you are chosen, you are worthy, YOU ARE REDEEMED!

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*Tell Your Story*

# Redeemed

## PART FOUR

She is a mother of a beautiful vivacious little girl, a devoted wife, and a mental health counseling master's student. When she speaks, it's as if you're talking to a longtime friend over a hot cup of tea. She has a way of making you feel understood, seen, and embraced with just one encounter. Her presence brings such warmth and peace, you can't help but know you are loved. Her simple yet wise words of encouragement show you the love of Jesus. Meet Ashley and welcome our guest of honor to part four of our guest devotional of this women's redeemed series. . .

***"I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name."***

***Revelation 3:8 NKJV***

One of the most frightening moments of my life was one afternoon where the thoughts of suicide overwhelmed me. Breathing was difficult, my chest felt heavy, my heart felt so broken, and my mind rushed with strange thoughts I never encountered before... But the seed my parents had planted in me through the word of God years prior allowed me to remember, hope comes from the Lord and the Lord alone. Here is my story: I should begin by saying my parents made an effort to instruct me in the ways of the Lord, even though they themselves left the church decades ago. They taught me the importance of submitting my life to the ways of the Bible in order to be saved and have eternal life alongside God. I am eternally grateful because their basic teaching of salvation had planted a seed in my heart that would in due time produce fruit and save me the moment suicide shadowed my mind. This reminds me of Proverbs 22:6 where it says, *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it"*. I grew up having this understanding there was a higher entity that offered eternal life. One that protected, loved, and provided for me. My parents were the instruments God used to answer my curious questions about existence, about heaven, and hell. Yet, my adolescent years brought on a lot of change, and I easily forgot what my parents taught me. The summer of 2004, I became excessively attached to a man whom I thought I loved and loved me. Yet, I was overwhelmingly confused by emotions and a physical desire not realizing that my need for acceptance and fulfillment should not and cannot come from a man but God himself. To some extent, I understood I was allowing myself to be ruled and guided by my flesh, by the emotional void I felt. Yet, I continued to walk in that same dangerous path. I lacked a sense of belonging and acceptance. I desperately wanted to feel loved and protected. And a man I had met did just that. He loved me, listened to me, and made me feel like I was important to him. He held me tight and provided me with protection. But his intentions were not true. However, I did not understand, nor did I want to believe otherwise. We dated for some time. By this time, the questions about God and my search for this higher being had stopped. I had become preoccupied with playing the role of "women." The day he walked out of my life, I became extremely frustrated, angry and depressed. I had become attached and codependent. I could not survive, I thought. I fell into a deep depression. I suffered from insomnia, lack of appetite, mood swings, crying spells, irritability. My life was over. Days, weeks, and months passed by and without my parents knowing what was happening, my life began to spiral down. One afternoon I told my mother I would be leaving earlier to head over to the library before going to class. I lied. I traveled to this man's house in hopes of seeing him to ask him the million-dollar question of why he had left me. But as I approached the house where he lived; I realized the house was vacant. My world was instantly shattered. That very moment I felt my knees become weak and tightness in my chest kept me from breathing normally. I began to tremble, and something told me I was better off dead. As I continued to walk, I envisioned myself throwing myself in front of a moving car. I literally thought I was going to die. It almost felt like I was being pushed to walk into moving traffic. Nevertheless, there was a magnetic force that kept me grounded on the spot where I was. It allowed me to stand still for a second. I can honestly say it was God himself, there, holding me, reminding me, having mercy on this poor broken soul. After a few minutes, I walked to the bus stop and decided to head over to school. When I arrived at school, students were instructed to sit in the auditorium to await classroom placements. I did as I was told. I sat there remembering what had just happened desperately needing immediate relief of the pain I felt. I reached into my purse and grabbed a navy-blue New Testament bible and asked God to help me. I opened the Bible to Revelation 3:8 and was instantly impacted from these words I never read before. God himself uttered His word into my ear; *"I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one*

*can shut it; for you have little strength, have kept my word, and have not denied My name”.* At that very moment, hope became apparent. The suicidal thoughts that heavily lingered around me, lost its grip, and I could breathe again. I couldn't believe what had just happened. The despair I felt was completely gone. God delivered me from the grasp of suicide and depression. I experienced immediate deliverance through His word. I am eternally grateful for His mercy and love for me. Now, I am a devoted woman of God who loves to serve and minister to others with the word of Salvation and hope. I am a wife, a mother, and a student of Mental health counseling. My passion is to share hope and assist others in experiencing self-actualization so that they also may experience growth, happiness, and deliverance. I pray my story ministers to you and reminds you of God's love for you and His desire to heal you.

# Redeemed

## PART FIVE

She is the founder of "Marriage & Motherhood & Mental health." Her heart is to empower mothers and wives to create joy and peace as they strive to honor their identity as women balancing multiple roles. Her smile always speaks volumes into the joy she seeks to impart to others. She has a godly confidence that exudes power and purpose. She's a speaker, a writer, a wife, a mom of three, and a mental health advocate. Meet Michaiah and welcome our guest of honor to part five of our guest devotional of this women's redeemed series. . .

***For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

***Romans 8:38-39***

They say there is a God sized hole within each of us that can only be filled by Him. We all have a desperate need to have the void filled. We can sometimes feel empty, lonely, afraid, and lost because of the gaping emptiness that lives within.

And so we search. We search to find the feelings, the people, places, and things that will satisfy the void. We look to external means instead of seeking the heavens. I was on this downward path journeying to find identity, belonging, acceptance, and validation. I did not know only God could fill the yearning. I was unaware only His presence and His love would heal the hurt that ran so deeply.

I turned to friends and the emptiness remained.

I turned to alcohol and the emptiness remained.

I turned to weed and the emptiness remained.

I turned to my career and the emptiness remained.

I got married and the emptiness remained.

I had children and the emptiness remained.

I even turned to church and the emptiness remained.

I exhausted all of my options and met a dead end at each road. Now my void was deeper, darker, fiercer because beyond my emptiness there was now guilt that shackled me. It kept me ashamed to go before my Father. I felt like a failure... a rejected, undeserving, unworthy soul. There was nothing left except to consider the option that perhaps it is only God Himself that could heal where I was broken. That through intimate fellowship He alone could see, understand, and fill me with joy, peace, and love. For the first time, in 2003, I availed myself to Him. I prayed a silent prayer for Him to save me and in those quiet moments was reminded He already had. Knowing all there was to know about me, He reassured me He loves me and called me as His own.

You see, we are never beyond redemption. You are never so 'far gone' or so 'bad' you cannot be saved. Jesus paid the price of our sin, he purchased our pardon and cleared our debt (not in part, but the whole). If you are feeling far from God's grace and love because of the search to fill your God sized void... if you are warring with shame over your sinful choices to cure loneliness or sorrow... be reminded nothing you can do will ever separate you from the love of God.

His grace is sufficient to fill every void in your life. His love is more than enough. May you accept his redemption even now as you are reading. May you allow His freedom to reign over your life to break chains of rejection, doubt, and all fear. He does not cast you away. He does not disapprove of you. He loves you with an everlasting love.

Dry your eyes. Allow him to keep you. To cover you. To fill you. Today, He redeems you back to Him. He wants to persuade you of His love. Let Him.

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*Tell Your Story*



# Redeemed

## PART SIX

She is a wife, a mentor, a mental health counselor, an educator, and a gentle but powerful woman of God. She has a way of speaking into your life with a listening ear and an open heart. Her intentionality is what causes her to invest and pour into those she comes across even if just for a few moments. With just one encounter, you know you've been seen. Meet Johanna and welcome our guest of honor to part six of our guest devotional of this women's redeemed series. . .

*"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*

When I consider from where the LORD has brought me, it feels like I am studying a case for one of my Mental Health Counseling classes. As the second child, I grew up feeling intimidated and inadequate. Although we lived in an affluent suburban town, I felt shamed by poverty, domestic violence, physical, and emotional abuse. There were days I struggled to concentrate in school because my mind was occupied with the violence I had witnessed the night before or the resentment I felt toward my older brother who physically violated me. When I got old enough to babysit on weekends, I counted the hours until I could leave the house and get away from the madness and chaos.

My reaction to my circumstances was to separate myself emotionally from the damaging messages that might have defined me at that time. I struggled with social awkwardness, fear, and insecurity. I know now that my sense that I was meant for something greater was planted in my soul by the God who sees. Even though the LORD didn't speak to me as He did Hagar in Genesis 16:11 and 12, He sent kind teachers, girl scout leaders, and other adults who served as good role models. His love and kindness were poured out through people who He used to take away my anger.

The LORD has given me an insatiable appetite to venture into unknown territory. After receiving a scholarship for my undergraduate studies in Special Education and going on to get my masters, I enjoyed teaching students with diverse abilities in New York City. Concerned I would "burn out," I opened a jewelry store with the blessing of my amazing gentle giant of a husband and the financial support of a friend. While the nine-year venture didn't amass the fortune I planned on, a customer witnessed to me about the love of a living God and I surrendered my life to Christ. Through the jewelry store, the LORD gave me a greater treasure, Himself. I spent hours studying scripture and was moved by the love of a sovereign LORD who spared nothing to have a relationship with His people, even me!

The truth of God's love has sustained me on my journey as an educator. It seemed fitting to get back to my passion for working with kids. God used my students from different cultures, socioeconomic circumstances, races, and religions to show me how vast His love was for all of His children. I witnessed how they endured the challenges of a variety of physical, emotional and/or learning disabilities, but dared to trust those who believed in them. Isn't that a picture of God taking us in our broken state and reminding us of His good plans for our future! (Jeremiah 29:11)

God is not done with me. Even though some women my age have chosen to leave the work force, I am embarking on my third career as a Mental Health Counselor. The transformative blessings I received while getting my second Masters (in Mental Health Counseling) from Nyack have produced new desires and passions. When I was most challenged to learn and apply new information, God was faithful.

Recalling how God has restored my life, I counsel my clients with hope and optimism. I see His good plans as I consider God's sacrificial love for the most broken (like me) and allow the Holy Spirit to guide my sessions. I am audacious enough to believe God will see me to the completion of my doctorate in Counseling Education and Supervision so I can serve to guide others who desire to bring hope and healing to others.

When I go to bed each night, I thank God and my husband because the enemies are on the outside of our house!

# Redeemed

## PART SEVEN

She is a devoted mother, a wife, and a skilled photographer. Her gift of encouragement draws out purpose in those who encounter her. She has a way of nurturing the fullness of who God sees someone as while connecting with them right where they are. Meet Yolanda and welcome our guest of honor to part seven of our guest devotional of this women's redeemed series. . .

*"For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."  
Romans 10:13 NIV*

At the age of 14, I tried to commit suicide. I was in High School, and I took a large knife to school so I wouldn't do it at home. In earlier years, I witnessed people I was close to try to hang themselves. I was always depressed and moody; never happy with how I looked. I remember days when I would stare out the window and think of death and how I hated life. I felt alone. But even though I desired death, there was still a small voice tugging at me.

Is there more to life than these feelings? Do I have more purpose than just misery?

Years later, a friend of mine invited me to church. That small voice that tugged at my heart prior was becoming louder and my heart beat harder as the service went on. The moment I surrendered and called on the name of Jesus, I felt Jesus redeeming my Life. The life I did not want because I never felt loved, I felt His love! It was alive in my soul. I cried as I surrendered and every single wall in my life came crashing down. Romans 10:13 says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." God not only saves you but redeems and restores all the enemy has stolen from you. He gives you not only happiness but JOY. He calls you to fellowship with Him. You are now HIS! And every day that goes by just say to yourself...if the grave could not hold Jesus, then it CANNOT HOLD ME! Isaiah 59:19 says, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Rejoice! This is the Savior we serve.

As you reflect on your life and its ups and downs, please be encouraged by this amazing bible verse: Jeremiah 1:5 which says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you."

You have history with the Lord. We have already encountered Him! There is a book written about us already. How great is that? And even more, there is a cloud of witnesses cheering us on to fulfill what's in that book, HIS PURPOSE IN US. Can you imagine the witnesses saying, "You got this! Stay focused. Through Jesus, you can finish this race. Run after the Lord! It's worth it!" So, I encourage you to pursue your calling and stay focused on Jesus. He is worth it...and so are you.

I bless you in Jesus' Name.

# Redeemed

## PART EIGHT

More than a year ago, I sat before God and asked Him to show me my story in His word. Just like that, I flipped to Psalm 107 and there it was! I wept as I saw my brokenness be transformed into His redemption for me. Out of that, this "Redeemed" series was born. When I first began this series, I had no idea in which direction it would go. I didn't know what women God would call to share a piece of their story on this platform, but I did it anyway. I did not think I would even be sharing my own testimony. But here I am. The final woman; number 8. It's the biblical number for new beginnings. I believe there is power in finding your God-given voice and sharing the story He has entrusted you with, your story of redemption. I'm the founder of Project Healing and this is my story. . .

*"Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story - those he redeemed from the hand of the foe."*

*Psalm 107:2 NIV*

The process of healing is a path of restoration. It's an arduous journey of sanctified suffering to walk humbly into freedom.

For nearly 15 years, I walked through my own wilderness. It was a loss of identity, abuse, self-harming, and self-medicating. I lost myself in the throes of a severe eating disorder that led me to two inpatient hospital stays. I remember standing in front of a mirror one day thinking I couldn't recognize the person staring back at me. I thought I would see a wide-eyed curvy young girl. Instead, I saw someone who was emaciated and starving for freedom; hungry for someone to understand the deep soul pain I couldn't even allow myself to feel. The eating disorder became who I was and I nearly lost my life because of it. My mom recently shared this with me. She said, "There were so many times over the years I thought you were going to die. I tried and did everything I could to help you but I couldn't so I would pray." I truly believe I'm here today as a result of prayers because I lost myself in this dark prison cell. It didn't matter how many weekly doctor's visits, hospital stays, and therapists I saw. I couldn't get out because I became comfortable in this place of depression and darkness. I knew this place so well. Darkness has a way of making you blind to the wounds right in front of you. It took falling into this deep pit for me to cry out for God to pick me up, rescue me, and set me free.

Although, I had been born and raised in church, I didn't know God. I knew what He hated. I knew what I couldn't do. But I didn't know He loved me with a love so deep it could heal those areas no one could see. When I began my own healing journey nearly 5 years ago, it started with one question; "God, if you really love me, then why do I feel so broken?" It was in this moment, it felt as if Jesus Himself stepped off the throne, entered my room, and embraced me with a love I didn't know I was desperate for. When I first encountered God for myself, the moment He became real to me, I met Him as the healer of my soul and the lover of my life! I've learned for God to heal, there sometimes needs to be a breakdown of the old to rebuild the new HIS way. Healing is very personal, very intricate, and sacred work. It's also very hard but so worth it. Healing is choosing to feel those difficult feelings. It's choosing to face those memories and experiences buried deep beneath layers of pain and suffering. You need to be willing to choose to get up close and personal with the very thing that causes you pain. You have to go through it in order to understand it and be free from its grip and power over your life.

### What is the work of healing?

1. Identification - building awareness to things that trigger an emotional response and allowing yourself to process through that in a healthy way. (Through prayer, journal writing, processing with a trusted person, talking to a counselor/mentor, etc.)
2. Connection versus control - What does your wound have to say? Your wound isn't the enemy and feelings are not negative! They are meant to be felt although you are not to stay there. If you shut it up and bury it, you are trying to control the impact it has but the effects of your pain always have a way of manifesting itself. It comes up in the present with how you respond, how you view the world, and how you relate to others.

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*Tell Your Story*

3. Surrender - Give God access into those painful areas. You have to let Him in. This makes you an active participant in your own healing where you take responsibility for the purposes set before you.
4. Re-frame - Choose to be transformed by reading the word of God. Study it, meditate on it, soak it in and watch how what was meant to harm you will be transformed into what catapults you. Invest into books on healing and educate yourself. Re-frame your negative experiences by identifying what came out of it; point out your strengths, your inner qualities, and what you learned as a result. Did you learn you are resilient? a victor and not a victim?

The point is to replace the lies with God's truths.

Choose to lay hold of the hem of His garment because when your wounds are healed, they are refined to birth your purpose. Know that a touch from God will heal you but an encounter with God will forever change you. Maybe an eating disorder isn't part of your story, but whatever it is, know that God is able to do abundantly and exceedingly above what you can think or imagine for His glory in your life. Choose to trust Him with your own healing! I can now say, I'm no longer ashamed of my story because I know Who entrusted me with it and it is HIM whom I serve!

Beloved, you are CALLED without delay. You are CHOSEN by grace. You are REDEEMED with purpose.