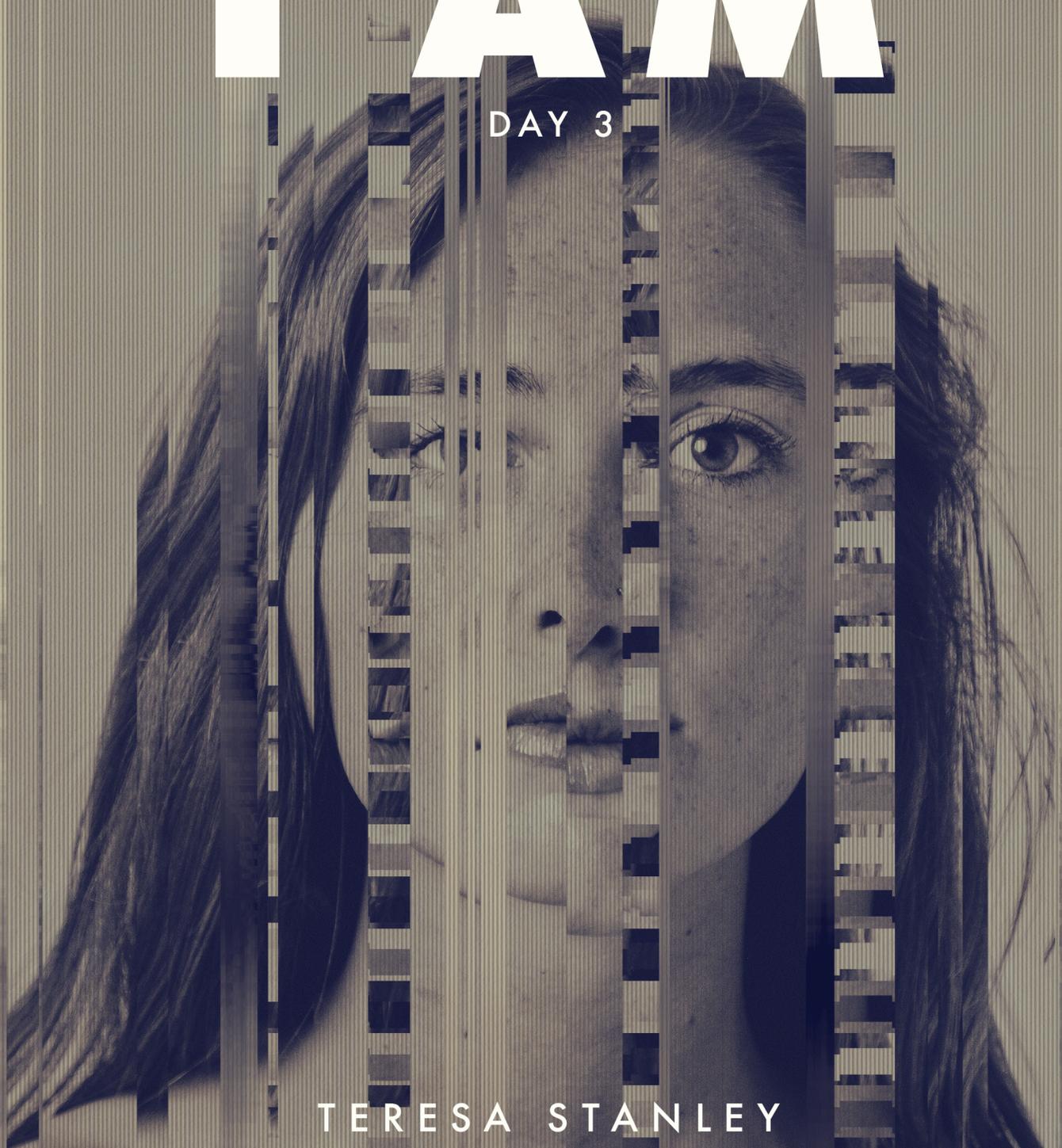


W H O Y O U S A Y

I A M

DAY 3



TERESA STANLEY

# DAY THREE

On Day One we talked about identity. On Day Two we spent some time learning the different ways God speaks to us, and now I have a question for you.

## Whose voice/voices are you listening to?

I have a very vivid memory which is the voice I listened to for a long time and still affects me today. When I graduated high school I wanted to go to University to become a dental hygienist, and when I shared this with my dad he said "No way, with your marks you need to study to be a dentist!"

Even though I didn't want to go to school for all the years required to be a dentist, as I said on Day One, I wanted my dad to be proud of me, and so I started University in pre-dentistry. Very quickly I realized that I was not going to make it, I just simply wasn't smart enough to do it, and so before they failed me, I quit! And I couldn't face my parents and their disappointment, so I moved out and left them a note.

Now as a mom, I can't even imagine how that hurt them. For so many years the voice I listened to said I was a loser, a coward and a failure. Even as I type this, these words cause an ache deep in my heart. I am no longer devastated by them, but they still hold some power over me, and I have to fight to not allow them to take root again.

*For all of us, we have many different voices coming at us and I believe the enemy can use these voices to keep us from living in our true identity.*

### Some of these are:

- The opinions of other people - who do they say I am? I need to become that to be accepted or fit in. (Kind of like what I was sharing in my identity story.)
- Hurt & pain that we've experienced in our lives disguising our true identity
- Media/culture sending us a message that who we are is not okay, we need to be more like \_\_\_\_\_ to be happy/cool/accepted. Being uniquely you is not where it is at.
- Our thoughts. We do control them, but people can suggest thoughts to us. God can suggest thoughts, and the enemy can suggest thoughts. Some of the thoughts the enemy likes us to dwell on are that we have to work to earn God's

acceptance, who we are is not enough, we don't matter, we are not important, worthless, our sins are too much for God and can never be forgiven, can't do anything right. These are lies that the enemy uses to bring shame into our lives and shame does not come from God!

All of these hide our true identity because as humans we tend to repeat these over & over again - the enemy only has to suggest it once and we do all the work, rolling it over and over in our minds. And as we do this, unfortunately these can become part of our identity.

## **But there is good news.**

It does not have to be this way! I think some of us have a distorted perception of what living "in Christ" means, what being a Christian means, and what our true identity is. Today, I want to spend some time painting a different picture, one that if we can truly live it out gives us incredible freedom to be who we are created to be and the confidence to walk in it. This is what has made a huge difference for me!

In the bible there are 35 statements of what it looks like to live "in Christ" today I want to highlight 5 of them.

## **In 1 Peter 2: 9&10 we are described as:**

- Chosen (accepted)
- Royal priesthood (fully capable)
- Holy nation (extremely valuable)
- People belonging to God (eternally loved)
- Receiving mercy (forgiven)

### **1. We are completely accepted!**

This was a pretty profound thought for me. I always wanted to be accepted, but more often than not, I wasn't. Can you think of a time you have been rejected? I know I can. I am not good at sports, just throwing that out there, and so I was NEVER picked first for a team. That stings, and as a kid was quite devastating.

I remember being what I thought was "in love" with a certain boy for literally years, and one day him telling me that I was one of his best friends but would never be more than that - Friend zoned, rejected! I tried to have my own sense of

style, but I didn't shop at the right stores ... teased, shunned, rejected! When you are rejected many times as a kid it can make it even harder to believe the good in yourself - almost like a curse. The only way to reverse it is to start believing what God says about you and repeating it over and over again until it becomes your new truth. In Ephesians 1:4 it says God loved us and chose us even before he made the world, that is pretty incredible!

## 2. **We are extremely valuable!**

If something is described as holy it is extremely valuable to God, and He calls us a holy nation! I love how in Isaiah 43:4 it describes us as precious to Him, we are honored and loved. I don't know about you but I don't think I have ever before been called precious by anyone or a treasured possession, but I do know as a mom what it is like to treasure someone, to have my heart be so full of love for this precious child that I have been given by God. To then somehow wrap my head around the fact that God feels that way about me, about all of you, that is humbling and awesome!

## 3. **We are eternally loved!**

God's love is not based on you but is based on Him, and the reason we have love in the world is because God is Love! God's love has 2 characteristics, it is unconditional, and unending. Jeremiah 31:3. He doesn't love you because of what you do, and He doesn't love you if you do the right thing, He just LOVES YOU!!

There is a huge difference between love and unconditional love. Love is 'earned' on the basis of conscious or unconscious conditions being met, whereas unconditional love is "given freely" to the loved one "no matter what". I understand earned love very well. In my home I felt, whether it is accurate or not, that my dad loved me best when I performed well - at school, doing as I was told, doing a good job without being supervised. If I failed it seemed as though he loved me less. This created a tremendous amount of insecurity that I wrestle with all the time. This is NOT how God loves us and I am grateful that I get to experience this now and love others, to the best of my ability, in this way.

## 4. **We are totally forgiven!!**

God knows everything. He knows everything we've done, and He is never surprised by our sin, and He forgives EVERYTHING! God doesn't hold it against

us, like we might do to people around us that we need to forgive. God doesn't get back at us because we have sinned that is not His character at all. He doesn't always approve of what we choose to do, but He always accepts us and forgives us when we ask. Nothing any of us have done eliminates us from his forgiveness - nothing! He may convict us when we have sinned but does not condemn.

### **He doesn't rehash our sins, He releases them.**

This gives us such freedom, not the freedom to do bad, mean, sinful things, but rather to not be held hostage by the guilt and shame these might hold over us, hiding our true identity!! Read Romans 8:1-2 just to hammer the point home!

### **5. We are fully capable!**

This one is actually more about what we do with our new identity and the freedom it brings. As a disciple of Christ we are "priests". In Acts 26:17-18 (MSG) it talks about how what we have received is our calling, our vocation, our service to share with others. It doesn't say exactly how to do it, but if we continue growing and practicing hearing from God, I believe he will direct us and give us the knowledge & confidence to do it. In 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 (MSG) we are given the authorization & power to do this from God, we are not just left to do this on our own - thankfully! In the way we have been accepted we need to accept others. As we realize how valuable we are, we need to treat others with respect, valuing who they are. As we have been forgiven completely, we need to forgive; not keep a record or a list so we can judge others or condemn them, but truly forgive. This is not a "to do" list to be a Christian. It is an overflow of what has been freely given to us. We freely give as an act of love and gratitude.

### **So who are you listening to?**

If you want to change those thoughts that keep rolling around in your mind keeping you from your true identity and freedom, talk to God. Maybe you need to ask forgiveness, or maybe you need to hear Him say something to you to affirm your identity and His delight in you. Maybe you have a question/doubt you need to bring to Him, or maybe you just need to sit in His presence and feel His love & acceptance of you. Whatever it is, I challenge you to take the time to do it, today!

### **He is waiting for you. <3**