

Introduction

Hey friend,

Welcome home. This is a safe space to process. To hear the heart of the father over your life and to return to his heart, his kingdom and make his presence your dwelling place again. Have you ever wondered what life was all about or got caught up in the entanglements of life just to realize you got lost all along the way and forgot what was most important? Yea, me too.. Join the club. It gets a little hectic in this world sometimes. We just want a steady place to come back to.

Someone we can trust, something that won't alter our life. Something predictable and steadfast. Reliable and true. I crave certainty. I crave consistency. I crave something that can just ease all my fears and anxieties and yet, somehow, it never comes. I can't get it from people, I can't get it from my job, I can't get it from anything other than Christ. Contentment only rests with him. Man how have I lost sight of him this past year of my life. I've been caught trying to get pleasure and wisdom from the people around me instead of seeking him and his kingdom first. I've messed up, royally. I have no idea what I am doing. And I need Jesus. He really deserves everything and I have totally lost sight of him. I need a big repentance session. Or maybe I just need to accept the love and grace he is extending to me and actually change for the better. Probably the latter.

Anyways, in this book, we will go on a journey together with our abba. We will let him take us through what life as a child of God looks like and let him be our teacher. We will learn lessons for what he has in store for our future together and we will trust him to bring us back to his heart. We will dedicate each chapter to what it looks like to live biblically as believers in Christ, and live in peace and unity amongst one another to the best we know how. Up front, I want to give a little disclaimer. Friend, I am with you in this. I will not claim to know everything, I just really love Jesus and want to look more like him. And if you do too, friend you are welcome here. First step, repentance, reconciliation and then the beautiful gift of restoration. Jesus has us friend. He is holding you, he loves you and he died for all of us. That is the gospel truth. Accepting it, is the greatest gift and relationship with Jesus is the greatest joy. I believe he has incredible things for you in this next season. I believe you will experience the joy of his salvation in brand new ways, and that his love will fill your life with an abundance you never saw or knew was possible. He has good plans for you.

I believe scripture is a beautiful aid to support these truths. I want to be weary of how much and when I use scripture in this book, because at times I believe we can use it as a weapon against people to discredit the pain or suffering people walk through. Friend, let me tell you the holy spirit is an incredible friend in suffering, and that is his purpose. He sees every moment no one else does, and there is no shame or condemnation when we come to Christ. We are completely seen, fully known, and fully loved. That is the beauty of love. His love never fails. We are enough in him, no matter what others say. Their approval falls at his feet. If you have ever read the book "You are special" by Max Lucado- its underlying message is that when we spend time

with our maker, we can become unoffenable and the “stickers” or “opinions” of other people, loose their power and are unable to actually stick. If there is one thing that I know is true- it is that God is love. He is the highest definition of love known to man through the life of Jesus, we can see a perfect example of true love. The ultimate sacrifice to lay one's entire life down for the sake of another is true love. God never gives up on you. Though we sin, he never gave up on his people. He kept pursuing them despite their wickedness, despite them turning to other gods, and forsaking him-he remained faithful. He is faithful whether or not we are, because he is good. In this journey of life, we only have one purpose, whether you accept it or come to realize it, and it is to know God and to make him known it is that simple, despite how complicated we make life out to be at times. The gospel is the most simple, profound and beautiful love story we have to contemplate on life, and it is my privilege to get to live it out each day as imperfectly as I know how. My prayer for this book is Ephesians 3:14-21 “For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

What a gift it is to have you embark on this journey with me. We will learn how to do life in this messy world with one another. How to have grace and love for our brothers and sisters, and how to learn to love the beautiful life God has given you all along the way, giving thanks for who he is, and healing our hearts, minds, bodies and communities in the process. Welcome to healing, and wholeness. You belong here, and you are loved, welcome home.

I'm a dreamer at heart, always have been. Have you ever wondered how in the world Walt Disney did it? People told him he was crazy- but he created things that no one ever thought was possible- I mean magic kingdom, come on- that is pretty incredible. He famously quoted “A man should never neglect his family for business.” He was on the money. He knew relationships were the key to success. He knew that his worth was not tied to his wealth, fame or success, he experienced rejection many times before his success so when he hit the spotlight, it didn't phase him because he was grounded. Family mattered and he would not waiver on that. When God blesses us, or suddenly we bring favor, how do we handle such a test? Will we remember what is most important? Or will we let fame, success get to our heads and bring us down. I have seen this come into play in my family and many other relationships. Once we start building our kingdom before seeking Christ's kingdom, we lose control, and can end up damaging his reputation. Ever seen the greatest showman? He started out small, and once he got big- he sought fame and success over his family, in so doing destroyed his very marriage, family and reputation.

This is why we must remember the Lord, whom we serve and be ruthlessly committed to the mission of His kingdom and not our own so we don't fall astray. This is no easy thing to do because there are many temptations we are faced with daily that we must fight and combat. But when we are focused on the Lord, he renews our strength and we can find unity in serving him and that is what we will dive into in this book. We all want one, we all live in one, and we are all trying to build one. What do you want, where do you live, and what are you building? We will examine what kind of kingdom we are building. There's only two, which one have you been living in? Your kingdom, or his?

In every kingdom, there is a battle for war. There is victory, and defeat. Who is fighting your battle? When we identify these things we can start to learn how to live and leave a glorious life.

Chapter one- What on Earth?

So, let's get to the foundation. Before we build anything, we have to start with your story. And it all begins with your house. A house? That doesn't make sense. Yea I know- but trust me on this one. Where you grew up will give you a roadmap of what you want to build. What you know, and were born into is yours to steward unto a better future. The foundation is what has been supporting your building. What was your home like growing up? What did it look like? What systems (how things were done) did you operate in? Was it structured, orderly or chaotic?

Once you identify these things, you have the first key to unlocking your story- which actually finds itself within the context of a greater story- one which goes back to the beginning of time.

In the beginning, God created a beautiful world, and the garden of Eden. There were no buildings, just natural beauty that God created. What a gift that God created these things for us to enjoy. Everything was perfect, until we went our own way and disobeyed his instruction and took life into our own hands, and thought we could live life on our terms, and according to what we think is pleasing. Here it is, before we go any further-sin. Anything apart from the Lord is considered sin. Isn't that wild? So if you are disconnected from the lord, and his voice- and you pursue something, he didn't tell you to do, it's actually considered a sin if it is not honoring him. That's actually so wild if you think about it. Anyways, that is a side tangent- but it is important to consider when learning to walk with Jesus, and being faithful to him.

Anyways, back to the garden. We have Adam the first human and Eve the second. They are walking with Jesus in the cool of the day, enjoying life in his beautiful garden, and lo and behold- the tempter, the satan comes in, and prompts them. He pushes them, he tests their faith. He doubts, he accuses God. They are confronted for the first time, made uncomfortable, challenged with what they will stand on. Will they stand on the truth of what God said to them? He gave them one stipulation to follow in the garden. It was an interesting request. Do not eat

from the tree in the middle of the garden-the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will surely die.

I haven't looked over this passage in a while, but I did for the purpose of writing this book and the lord gave me a pretty powerful revelation. So, God said "do not eat from it, for you will surely die." Satan says the contrary, "Did God really say you will die, or your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God knowing good from evil?" So eve saw it was desirable fruit and good for gaining knowledge and she took it and ate and gave some to her husband and he took it and ate.

Let's dissect this a little bit. God gave them a choice. To listen to his wisdom, to stay connected to him, by following his instruction, or to do their own thing. This is the essence of free will. We have the ability to take matters, life and all circumstances into our own control, make our own plans and do whatever we please-to a degree. God says, surely you can do this and in this you think you are like me, because you were made in my image, and have autonomy to make your own decisions. Yet, what we as humans so frequently forget, is that if we are actually not connected to God, and following his instruction, we are actually persecuting him, and we are actually living in sin, according to our flesh and not according to the spirit of God. We are actually disobeying him, wreaking havoc in the world and we need to take a full stop before matters get worse. I am one of these, so often thinking I am serving the lord and justified in my actions when really I am persecuting him. This brings me to the life of a true believer. The conversion from saul to paul is the prime example to examine. He was a pharisee, knew the scriptures and the law like the back of his hand, and God literally stopped him in his tracks on his way to do the "work of the Lord." Or so he thought to literally blind the man's eyes and say kindly "bro, no let me give you my actual heart and life because you think you are doing the right thing, but your actually destroying what I came to fulfill which was the law and prophets through the life of Jesus."

This is the second example of sin that we can clearly see in the new testament. It's the essence of deception. One quote I heard a while back was that the power of deceit lies in how close it can come to the truth. That was a pretty powerful quote and it has stuck with me for a long time. As christians, we hate the truth, and it is hard to decipher what is actually true when there are so many lies swarming around us. To tell what is true and what is a lie, is actually a really difficult process when you are constantly being accused of things in your life, or people like to cause blame and not take responsibility for their part play in creating sin because we don't want to admit our brokenness- that would kill our pride, and cause shame. We dont like shame, we dont like humility, we dont like repentance, we don't like these things because it makes us look weak, and we don't like being wrong. At least I don't- can anyone relate? Join the club.

Anyways, back to Saul, how could someone so spiritual who should know everything because he grew up knowing the scriptures be so freaking far from the heart of God?

This chapter I read one day and it always stuck out to me- Paul was on trial and he appeals before the king and this is what he says as defense for his faith - Acts 26-

“The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high-ranking military officers and the prominent men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. ²⁴ Festus said: “King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. ²⁵ I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the Emperor I decided to send him to Rome. ²⁶ But I have nothing definite to write to His Majesty about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write. ²⁷ For I think it is unreasonable to send a prisoner to Rome without specifying the charges against him.”

Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.”

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: ² “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, ³ and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

⁴ The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. ⁵ They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. ⁶ And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. ⁷ This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. ⁸ Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

⁹ I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

¹² “On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³ About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven,

brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. ¹⁴ We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic,^[a] ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

¹⁵ “Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

“ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. ¹⁶ ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. ¹⁷ I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

¹⁸ So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. ²⁰ First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. ²¹ That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. ²² But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— ²³ that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

²⁴ At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.”

²⁵ “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. ²⁶ The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”

²⁸ Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”

²⁹ Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

³⁰ The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. ³¹ After they left the room, they began saying to one another, “This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.”

³² Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

The story continues that Paul sails to Rome and declares that “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet:

“Go to this people and say,
“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.”

For this people’s heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.’

²⁸ “Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” ^[29]

³⁰ For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. ³¹ He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!”

He then continues to write the book of Romans preceding this trial, and does a few other missionary journeys planting new churches and sharing his testimony in the neighboring regions. We do not know how he died, but he eventually did.

Paul is a prime example to see how the Holy spirit can straight up convict anyone, to a point of radical transformation following heart and life change. Once Paul realized his sin, he immediately started doing the complete opposite action. The very church he was seeking to demolish and destroy, he was started to build and grow, eventually sacrificing his very life for it. People called him insane, but what he finally realized in all of this, was he reconnected himself to God, or maybe better put- God connected himself back to Paul and that changed his whole perspective.

We can see this concept throughout the old testament and trace it with significant characters that God used in the Bible. It's the language of covenant. God chooses certain people to establish a covenant with to carry out his promise through them. It's a beautiful trust built relationship he creates with humanity as a plan to try and attempt to bring them back to the order he created in Eden. God does this with people who listen to him, his voice, who trust and obey. Some significant characters you might recognize would be Abraham, Moses, David- Jesus (obvi) and then post that we got Paul, John and many others just to name a few.

God is so cool, guys. I could talk about his goodness all day- but we are just laying the groundwork here- the foundation here.

So we have God, people, eden (the garden) relationship and covenants going on here. Then we have humans- and in the old testament we have a people group, the Israelites that would be God's "chosen" people who he selected to really focus on living out this covenant with him, which was expressed through rituals, that were given to Moses to establish within the community to keep them holy, pure, set apart from others distinguishing them as his own.

But, the people struggled with this, it started as a priestly nation, and then actually turned more into an empire or kingdom, and got pretty legit. But the people kind of lost sight of the heart of God, and easily got pretty entitled with their "chosenness" and holiness and just started making a mess of things. This was a pretty repeated pattern all throughout the old testament. We can see it through the Israelites lying, stealing, cheating, killing each other and doing pretty heinous and evil acts towards one another- sin, again, again and again. Deception, again and again and again. Thinking because they are the chosen ones they have the right to act however they want, and God just can't even with people anymore, and honestly I don't blame him.

Here comes plan b, after years of rebellion and disgrace to God—he decides to promise a king to come and reign Israel who will rid them of all of their sin. This king will save them-someway, somehow again. So Jesus enters the scene. Born into the world, with high expectations from his people, and excitement and he turns out to be well pretty lame.

He is nothing special, just a regular degular human, and a pretty poor one for that matter. Nothing special, born in a freaking barn, and genuinely literally the most basic common life except he apparently had a title to his name that he would "somehow save the world." LOL.

Good plan, god- that's cute, but for real what the heck is going on. You think some poor little boy you decided to make human is going to save all of humanity from their years of corrupt behavior because he has a title to his name and will let people kill him. Good one.

All sarcasm aside, apparently, God actually thought this was a good idea. For some reason. I guess the one thing about Jesus is that he is actually quite relatable. In the sense that, he was pretty average and that is kind of refreshing because honestly none of us are that great- at the end of the day.

But the thing about Jesus, is he actually understands what it's like to be human and that is actually why he is so great. He was a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief-the son of suffering. He wasn't afraid of brokenness, he welcomed it. He sat with sinners and tax collectors. He touched

lepers. He rebuked demons, and although he was human-he was also legit God. So he actually was able to not sin, because he was connected to God, and knew the better way was to listen to God, and be connected to his father and therefore could actually resist the enemies temptations, and just be obedient to God and gave his whole life to us as an example of what that practically looks like. Love in action is the very life of Jesus Christ on display. That's pretty cool, and pretty special that we have so many stories to look over what he did and said, and how he lived, okay-good plan God, you are on to something.

We look at Jesus as the model of embodied love. Let's dissect his life a bit.

We know he is average, nothing special, but it was how he lived and what he did that set him apart. How did he differ from other humans?

He only obeyed God's voice. He was extremely focused on his mission in life, which was to obey the father's commands and that was it. We can see through the story of his life that the father commanded him to do a lot of strange things. Things that did not make sense to people, but he did it to increase their faith in him- this is where we see him performing miracles and such.

In addition to that though, he also had the ability to tell the enemy no. He followed his father's plan, and showed us what righteous living looks like. What this looks like is being connected to the father, and living in a covenant relationship with him, to be a light to the world and to show the world who he is. Jesus did this ultimately by speaking the truth in love, and building up a community of love rooted in the wisdom and love of God. He made friends. He taught people, and showed them the way to father with his lifestyle. If Jesus was here in the twenty-first century I wonder what occupation he would have. Would he be a carpenter? Barista? Mail man? Who knows, but every part of his life was intentional and part of God's ultimate master plan.

Jesus is the promise fulfilled in the law and the prophets and the message he gave was about the new kingdom he was establishing. It wasn't about power, prestige or control. It was always about covenant and relationship that was the kingdom he was seeking to establish, and he did it primarily through the gentiles because most of his own people would not accept him because he wasn't the king they were looking for, hoping for or awaiting.

I love this about Jesus. Again, so boring. Nothing special about the "Promised messiah" but this is what makes him so relatable to people.

Experiencing rejection from people who are "supposed" to be your fan club but end up actually persecuting you is like.. Um the worst feeling ever?

God had a plan in it. Always did, always will. The point of the gospel is that it's actually supposed to mess you up. It's supposed to convict you. It's supposed to humble you out of your self righteousness, and bring you back to God- that's why it's so good, so pure and perfect. Jesus knew on his mission he would be rejected, despised and hated by the ones he chose to love and he still came knowing that.

Why in the world would anyone put themselves through that kind of suffering? Literally there was nothing he was getting out of that other than pure obedience and devotion to the father, and a pretty humiliating and devastating life of suffering. Why is that the example of the greatest love ever known? Why did he say “father forgive them, for they know not ought what they do?” Why would he allow himself to be subjected to death if he did not deserve to die? Did he really think we would get the point and see the light through that? Did he really think he could save the world?

I guess he must have had to know what he was doing. I guess he knew when he created the world, he would have to come up with some master plan to help broken humanity. Or maybe he didn't and he is winging it as much as we are. Either way, one thing is undeniably clear in the person, promise, and life of Jesus.

There is no other human being who has willingly subjected themselves to die for the sake of the sins of every other human being dead or alive. That's a pretty radical and bold claim if I do say so myself, and quite literally who in their right mind would do that for their own benefit- like no matter who you are, to make a claim like that- there is nothing he is getting out of that, at all except total destruction for himself. So it has to be true, because otherwise it makes absolutely no sense.

That's the beauty. I love that we can not fathom God, and we can not understand him.

Romans 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

His ways and his thoughts are higher than ours, and that is why he is God and we are not. I really want to get better at following him, instead of myself. His plans are so much better.

We know his plans are better, because he actually loves us. The life of Jesus is proof of his love. God would not have sent Jesus if he did not love us. John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son so whoever believes in him shall have eternal life and not perish.”

God created. He initiated life. He created relationships. He invites a covenant. He was in the garden. We respond, we walk with him. The devil initiates, we respond, or we rebuke. He gives free will to choose him or not. We replace this with connection, or rejection- he lets us choose- life or death. Every human gets to choose for themselves. We go through seasons. Sometimes I feel closer to God than others, continuing to choose him instead of choosing my own things. But in this world, it is not easy to choose him, when we are distracted day and night by so many other things, and I don't think we understand the gravity and reality of how strong temptation can be. It takes legit discipline to stand your freaking ground to the enemy and say to hell with you Satan to follow in God's ways for us. As Americans we underplay this reality on a daily basis and downplay sin like it's no big deal. I'm so tired of the fact that we need to understand the reality of what the enemy is up to in the world.

Listen up, fellow friend. Two things I know are true. That is most of life- gray, not black and white. Two things can be true at the same time. The devil has come to steal, kill and destroy. God has come to bring life and life abundant. What does that mean in relation to identifying sinful actions in our lives?

As christians we don't really know how to identify sin in our current world its gets all like messy , cause we no one likes to admit when they are living in sin, because there is obviously a lot of shame attached to it once you understand and identify that is might actually be sin.

So, like what is sin exactly then? God made it clear that in the garden anything we do that we think is holy “in our eyes” according to our own wisdom that we think is for him, but it is actually apart from him and not pleasing to him is to be considered sin.

Okay, that's vague so let's break it down a little bit more. How can we be living “according to the bible” but still be living in sin?

This is where we look back to Jesus. Throwing religion out the window, cause that obviously didn't work. Jesus said the greatest commandment is to “love the lord your god with all your heart, soul, mind and strength- and the second is like it, to love your neighbor as yourself.”

Shoot dang. Seems simple. It's not. It's too vague. Jesus reinstated the 10 commandments in the new testament but how people choose to live that out is genuinely up to their discretion. There is no one road map to spiritual correction, yes we have the bible to look to but how we interpret it

between believers is going to look so different based on our life experiences and formed beliefs. So how do we attain unity in the body of Christ? How do we function as a church- if we all want the same thing, but don't have the words or guts to say it or the ability to live it out perfectly.

Dont worry friend, im here for you- I got the words your heart and soul have been longing to hear.

You, body, soul mind and strength-past, present, and future versions have been fully known, accepted, loved, welcomed and deeply, passionately, intimately and completely loved by the creator of the universe himself. That love existed inside you at the point of conception, to the moment you took your first breath, first step, first word, first bike ride, and will be until the moment you take your last. It's within you, beside you, all around upside down in between covering every part of your being; it's the holy spirit, the fullness of God himself- Jesus your best friend. You can welcome into the home of your heart, he loves to dwell when you make some room for him. I promise, he wont let go. The only times he seems far and distant is when we let other people have space only he was meant to carry.

Jesus knew this well. He loved others, but he knew he needed time to go and be alone with the father. This was his time to recharge and connect with him directly before pouring out to others. Man, what a guy he spent 40 days in the wilderness. I wish I had that amount of faith that Jesus would sustain me. I can barely spend like 3 days by myself without losing my mind. We can look to him to be sanctified and as our example on how to live a holy and pleasing life here on this earth.

Okay, now that we got that squared away. Lets go back to this topic and issue of what is sin and what is not sin. As believers is it our job to point out sin in another person if it is causing us harm?

Honestly, great question. I've come to the understanding that it really depends on the relationship and what God is calling you to at that time. At the end of the day, God knows every person's heart and conscience and he is the ultimate judge. He will bring justice where earthly authorities cannot. It's like insurance-he has got you covered, as long as your heart is genuinely pure and repentant before him and you have taken necessary steps to seek forgiveness and reconciliation with people, believers or not. God does not acquit the innocent. He is not out to get you. He loves when sinners repent, and he loves when his kids forgive each other it actually makes his heart sing and rejoice. There is a verse about that. :)

That's reassuring right? Even if you don't see justice here on this earth- the lord can bring that for you! Let's go.

So, is it a sin if a human lives in bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness towards you for like a long time- holding a grudge against you for the way you have hurt them?

Hm, that is a good question, one I have been pondering for a while.

This one hits pretty close to home because I have experienced a lot of hurt in relationships from people in life, as im sure you could relate.

Here comes my story. If you know me, you might be exposed but I promise it is only for healing purposes cause we can not heal what we do not reveal into the light to let the lord work on.

So, relationships amongst people. Here we go. Where do we even start?

Let's start with expectations. All of us have preconceived expectations for relationships whether we recognize them or not based on what our culture has developed over time. So, expectations for what family, friendships, and romantic relationships should be, or what we want them to look like.

What happens when those expectations do not meet reality?
Automatic disappointment. Bro, the amount of times I have ended up in the disappointment pit. It is such a miserable and quite comical place to be might I add. But honestly, I'm taking everything in, and using it. It actually is teaching me so much that God is wasting nothing.

I'mlaughing because I'm thinking of the amount of times I have gone to specifically guys to fill a void. What do we do with disappointment in unmet expectations in relationships that can cause hurtamongst believers? Do we take it to God or do we use it as leverage to hold against the one wehave a grudge or grievance against?

Itdepends on who you choose to be.

Jesus.

He had every right to fight back. He has every right to actually murder every human- because they treated him terribly, and it would have been justified for him to fight back to defend himself, he was perfect. And what did he do?

He let himself be murdered. He literally let other people murder him willingly and he didn't stop it.

Have you ever felt like people were out to destroy your reputation, or ruin your life?

Same.

Jesus knows.

He sees. He loves you, and he is with you. He understands what feeling misunderstood is like.

You want to know something beautiful about Jesus; he is the prince of peace, and a wonderful counselor.

He provided the holy spirit specifically to comfort us uniquely in the troubles we face. He gives wisdom to those who seek it. He provides it through his word which is truth and his spirit which gives life. 1 Corinthians 1-4 explains this well.

What are we building?

His kingdom.

Chapter two - How on Earth?

Cool. So we have a little bit of an idea. God established covenants with his people in the old testament through relationship with his people, and through that he established a kingdom. Small one, with the Israelites and eventually got bigger, until Jesus came. Then, as he does- he flipped the script again on humanity, creating an upside down kingdom. Oh Jesus, what are you doing now?

This is where his master plan comes on display. Remember Walt Disney, and P.T Barnum from the greatest showman? They had two slightly different stories, one remembered to stay humble when he was elevated, and the other did not. Here we see what Jesus was all about in his kingdom. The mission of God's kingdom is clearly stated in Matthew 5 1:-12 “He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

God's kingdom is about connecting people to him and his heart. The beatitudes are the map to guide and direct people exactly back to his heart.

God's kingdom is about learning to love and follow him and then doing that together. God's kingdom is not about the best of the best. No prestige is necessary, no power needed, just a willing and available heart that is turned toward him, and willing to delight in him. God's kingdom is for everyone. The poor, the rich, the broken, and the beautiful. The best part is it's a free gift to enter, and he won't reject anyone who comes with a pure heart.

His desire was to have everyone be a part and get to know him, what a joy and honor that we get to be a part of it, and he actually wants us to partake in building it together!

This is such amazing news. So how do we do this? How do we work together as the Lord's kids to build something beautiful together?

Ahhhh great question.

One answer.

Teamwork.

So they say, teamwork makes the dream work..

It is true, as God's kids, we are on the same mission of building the kingdom and we can function as a team to get the job done.

Remember the analogy of your house you grew up in at the beginning?

When we entered this world, whether you knew it or not, you were born into a greater story, which is God's story - but you also have your own story. Your testimony.

Chapter three- My story

So, here I'm going to share a little bit about my story. Welcome, I hope my vulnerability is a place for healing, and sacred space for you to see how God can be at work in your story and how to connect that with his greater plan of redemption of the world.

So enter Kaylee Renae Glessner into the world era 2001, September 30th a beautiful crisp fall day- hello world. Here I come ready or not. I was born into a family with two older siblings and two parents that follow king jesus in little lancaster county. Raised in a family that prioritized faith, family and fun to say the least. I was so blessed to grow up next to my cousins and grandparents in the countryside where we got to play outside, swim in the pond, build forts outside and make so many fun memories. Life was good to say the least. I look back on my childhood with fond memories. I grew up going to church, traveling, playing sports, working, hanging out with friends and going to a christian school. This is where I built a strong community, and relationships with friends and family. This is where the lord really burdened my heart for missions through church when I started taking missions trips with my high school and church. Seeing those in impoverished countries really changed my perspective and made me realize how blessed I was. In this though, my personal relationship with Jesus was ignited. I fell in love with him through a local ministry that came and did ministry in my county that showed me a version of Jesus I never knew, he was so relatable like I could actually know him, and I really started enjoying spending time in his presence. He made me feel seen, heard, understood and known. His presence brought me peace, and comforted me unlike anything else I ever encountered before and it changed me. I could hear his voice, and I liked it when he spoke to me. He made me feel chosen, special, even loved- just being with him became my favorite.

Through that though, I had dreams growing up to do some type of ministry. The lord always put a passion on my heart for counseling, because I love seeing reconciliation in relationships and seeing Jesus heal brokenness. I loved that because I witnessed a lot of brokenness in my family. It was powerful to me to see that God could use his body of christ to help one another out of conflict, into unity peace, wholeness and shalom. That made my heart happy to know, and so I was passionate to pursue it. And in a beautiful sunny state of California? Who could shut down such a wonderful idea?

Growing up, my family, cousins and grandparents were so close. We are neighbors, went on vacations together, spent every holiday together and went to church and school together. It was the best. We made so many memories together that I will always cherish and they were like my built in besties :)

In my junior year of high school, my families life radically altered and changed. My parents and aunts and uncles all worked together as well in a family business as long as I was alive. That year though, everything changed. My parents unexpectedly stopped working at our family business.

This came as a complete shock to our whole family system, and honestly none of us had the slightest idea how to recalibrate and recover after that. It seemed like everything we did, was suddenly destroyed and nothing felt stable anymore.

If we all love Jesus, why is this happening? Why couldn't they just figure it out and keep things the way they were? Why did we have to go through this? My parents suddenly didn't have a job, and we as kids didn't know what to do.

This is a common question I asked the Lord during that time. Why can't we all get along, and love each other, if we are Christians we shouldn't be going through this, right?

It has been said that your pain point, has a purpose.

It hurts me so bad because we are family. So what do we do when the body of Christ is not in unity? How in the world do we function when there is a literal war at hand?

Colossians 3:1-17 explains this beautifully "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek ^cthe things that are above, where Christ is, ^dseated at the right hand of God. ² ^eSet your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For ^fyou have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ ^gwho is your ^l life ^happears, then you also will appear with him ⁱin glory.

⁵ Put to death therefore ^kwhat is earthly in you: ² ^lsexual immorality, impurity, ^mpassion, evil desire, and covetousness, ⁿwhich is idolatry. ⁶ ^oOn account of these the wrath of God is coming. ³ ⁷ ^pIn these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now ^qyou must put them all away: ^ranger, wrath, malice, ^sslander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ ^tDo not lie to one another, seeing that ^uyou have put off ^vthe old self ^wwith its practices ¹⁰ and ^xhave put on ^ythe new self, ^zwhich is being renewed in knowledge ¹¹ after the image of ^aits creator. ¹¹ ^bHere there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, ⁵ free; but Christ is ^call, and in all.

¹² ^dPut on then, as ^eGod's chosen ones, holy and beloved, ^fcompassionate hearts, ⁸ kindness, ^hhumility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ ^hbearing with one another and, ⁱif one has a complaint against another, ⁸ forgiving each other; ⁸ as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on ^jlove, which ^kbinds everything together in ^lperfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let ^mthe peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called ⁿin one body. And ^obe thankful. ¹⁶ Let ^pthe word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, ^qsinging psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, ^rwith thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And ^swhatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, ^tgiving thanks to God the Father through him.

If we actually internalized this truth, we would walk in unity naturally and organically, because we would be walking in love, living according to his spirit- for God is love.

This requires us to examine ourselves before the Lord and rebuke sin. It requires us to go back to the first chapter, and learn to hear the Lord's voice- to listen to the Father, and follow his commands instead of our own. Remember even if we think we are doing something that is "of

the lord” if it is actually apart from the Lord, and an act of the flesh it is sin. If it is an act of the spirit, it will be done in love. And God works all things together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose, so if it is of the spirit- the truth always comes out, and it will eventually be good. God is not done until it is good, because he is a good God, and that is how unity works. Gods heart is not ever for disunity, but if it is for the ultimate good, he will use even that for unity if both parties are seeking the Lord- because that still brings glory, honor to him, God is pretty rad.

But when it is clearly an act of the flesh, that will be evident by the fruit of the actions.

When we fail to do this, we start to build our own kingdoms instead of our own. This is where we can fall into deception thinking we are serving the Lord and building his kingdom like paul, but we are entirely missing the point. Our motives are skewed and selfish. We are spiritually blind, chasing performance, chasing fame, pride and recognition and missing the heart of God, the true mission of the kingdom- the main point. People being connected to the love of God. That is what is all about, covenant and relationship. God wants our heart, and obedience to him. Nothing else. The beautiful part? Now that you have heard part of my story, you will see how it gets to play into Gods bigger plan which is what our stories should ultimately be for- his kingdom.

Chapter 4- Your story

Alright, so now we know we were born into Gods story, and our story starts in our home. There is a mission to build a kingdom- not ours, but the Lords. So how do we do this business with the family we have been born into?

Well, assess your story. Look back to where you came from to get direction for where you want to go. What area has God chosen to divinely appoint you into, and what can you do there to start building his kingdom with what you have already been given? God doesn't need you to do everything, just take one step towards him in faith, and he will meet you there.

As you move, and uncover where you came from, where you are and define where you are going- you will inspire others, and heal yourself and them in the process. If they are not in unity with you, keep seeking the Lord and he will provide a spiritual family for you to walk alongside you to support you as you navigate the truth about your story and what God is saying to you through it.

It is undeniably true that where God is guiding you, he will provide for you. In a business, you have employees and entrepreneurs. God isn't in the business of making profit for himself. But if you think of how a business operates, it needs each system and part to function in unison for the whole organization to flow. The same is true for God's kingdom. The more we work together in love, the more we are able to function and flourish as a team for God's glory- the profit is his

renown, but we all need to be obediently working, and playing our part as a team for the dream to work.

Reflect on what kind of life you have been living, and what kind of life you want to live with god. When connections began to come from your past, present and future, write them down. God is creative, he created you, and you have unique gifts, talents and your very own story that you get to uncover with him to inspire and encourage others. This is the work of family business, learning your role, and simply being faithful steward in that, and while we do that side by side with our eyes on christ, we are able to fulfill the great commission, the mission of the kingdom. In so doing we are functioning, working together as a team, a body, a church, a family-in business.

Chapter five- Conclusion

So, we have come to the end.

We have developed a safe space for you to belong. A place amongst the beloved, in his kingdom- to accept the love of God, and to learn to live in relationship with him, walking with him and following his voice for all our days. Resisting sin, and obeying his commands- staying rooted in the love of God.

So as you assess your story, the home you were born into- you can find your place within God's story, your heavenly family and the unique plan he has for you to expand his kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.

What unique gifts has he blessed you with?

What kind of story do you have?

What passions has he placed on your heart?

They are purposeful tools for you to learn how to unlock the way you were created to work and build for him- your original design, God's master plan for you to discover in this life as you get to know him more, you get to know who you truly are. Pretty cool thought process, If i do say so myself. Thank you, Abba.

Every step we take in our relationship toward Jesus, he will meet you and give you direction, and slowly but surely you will see progress. Staying rooted in his truth, in his love, you will find abundant life.

It will not be easy, remember we are in a war, and there is a battle raging against the kingdom of God so you must remain prepared to fight back against the temptations, promptings, and accusations from the enemy he will throw at you to try to distract you and make you go off course from serving the lord. Don't give in, resist.

If Jesus can resist temptation- we have power to overcome it as well. We must be agents in this, and actively be working to remove these things to stay focused on him. As we do this we are overcome by the blood of the lamb and the word of our testimony. Staying connected to the vine, and in spirit filled community, to keep us holy and pure. But each person will be tested to their own faith, and will be accountable to and for themselves.

Building the kingdom, is building the church-because it's all about relationships and restoring us back to God's heart, and our opportunity to get to truly know it. That is God's master plan, plain and simple. Oh the joy of our salvation, his love friend- is better than life itself. His love is life. May you live your life, all your days dwelling in his love. I will leave you with this benediction, arguably the best chapter in the bible- if I do say so myself.

Friend- remember, you belong- you are welcome here, and you are so loved, and I am so deeply honored that you embarked on this journey with me and the Lord exploring what it looks like for us to be active agents in participating in building his kingdom here on earth till he returns.

Friend, we truly are stronger together- friend we are the church, founded on Jesus Christ the messiah the son of God and the gates of hell will not overcome it, because we triumph over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimonies- we do not love our lives so much as to shrink from death (revelation 2:11).

Romans 8

Life through the Spirit

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you^[a] free from the law of sin and death.³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh,^[b] God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.^[c] And so he condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life^[d] because of righteousness. ¹¹And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from

the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of^[e] his Spirit who lives in you.

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.^[f] And by him we cry, “*Abba*,^[g] Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Present Suffering and Future Glory

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope²¹ that^[h] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[i] have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

More Than Conquerors

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”^[j]

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[k] neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He is coming soon. Stay rooted in truth, devoted in your work, and remain always in his love.

In his love,

Your friend,

Kaylee Renae

