

HOW 7 NAMELESS WOMEN
OF THE BIBLE REVEAL
CHRIST'S LOVE FOR YOU

HE KNOWS YOUR NAME

PAIGE ALLEN



“He Knows Your Name is a must-read for women and men alike. I’ve known Paige Allen for many years, and she articulates straight from God’s Word those sentiments that we all sense arising in our hearts: *Does He see me? Does He know me? Will He be there in my need?* This book hits the mark and addresses these questions of the heart by exploring some of the more obscure women who encountered God in the pages of Scripture. Paige Allen is a rising voice in our nation today!”

Randy Boyd, executive director, Prepare International

“Get the tissues ready. Paige Allen brilliantly takes nameless woman in the Bible and somehow allows us to see ourselves identifying with their struggles and pain. Using her own vulnerability and transparency she brings us besides still waters and assures us that He knows our name.”

Maria Durso, pastor and author, Saints Church

“You are blessed to have this book in your hand. All of us feel unseen at times, and this book does a great job of unwrapping those moments, encouraging us, and filling us with glimpses of God’s love. Paige so clearly and beautifully portrays Jesus’s heart through the pages of *He Knows Your Name*. We’ve known Paige for nearly twenty years and have seen her minister to different groups of people worldwide, and her voice has consistently spoken God’s love and presence to a variety of listeners. Paige has a credible voice that should be heard. We highly encourage all to read this book.”

Dwayne and Leslie Weehunt, cofounders,
SOS International Ministries

“As a businesswoman, TEDx speaker, pastor’s wife, and mom, I’ve come across women from every sector of society and know at our core we are all asking similar questions about the value we bring to this world. In *He Knows Your Name*, Paige Allen speaks to these questions and brings actual hope! Women will walk away

from this book with a new confidence that they matter because Jesus not only sees them but knows them too!”

Lynette Lewis, TEDx speaker, business consultant, author

“I can’t wait for you to read this book! Paige gives all of us permission to identify the ways we feel nameless and yet are seen and known. Relevant and widely applicable, this book will have you reflecting on Jesus and the very intimate encounters He longs to have with you.”

Laura Brandenburg, author of *Not Forgotten: Unraveling Questions of Faith and Infertility*

“Paige masterfully reminds us that the birthright of everyone in Christ is this: knowing we are His and He is ours—no matter how the world defines us. As you read, you’ll laugh, you’ll cry, and I bet you’ll know and love Jesus even more than when you started.”

Sara Lubbers, author of *Always Love* and *Our God Wins*

“If you’ve ever asked yourself the question *Where do I belong?*, especially as a woman in the kingdom, this book is a safe haven filled with women who have asked that same question. You will be equipped, challenged, encouraged, and inspired to surrender to Jesus all over again.”

Zahriya Zachary, Bethel Music

“Paige Allen offers a fresh perspective by weaving together biblical and personal stories. You feel like she is talking directly to you! Deep spiritual truths are shared in easy-to-understand ways that leave you encouraged and challenged. Almost like being wrapped in a warm, comfy blanket. It is hard to put the book down!”

Dr. Kathy Crockett, Kathy Crockett + Co

**HE
KNOWS
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NAME**

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For my mom,
who showed me it's okay to wrestle with belonging
because on the other side is the knowing—
He sees us and that is always enough.

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INTRODUCTION

What's in a Name?

I'm a pastor's kid who grew up in the late '80s and early '90s. During Halloween, many evangelical churches instead hosted Harvest Festivals, Trunk or Treats, or, in our church's case, an annual Hallelujah Night! There were games, candy, a chili cook-off, and awards handed out for the best Bible character costume. A couple of years into trying to compete for this coveted award, I realized my options were fairly limited as a girl trying to dress as a Bible character. In a sea of Marys and Queen Esthers, there was usually someone who stood out because they did something extra creative, like the one girl who dressed up as Jezebel (spicy), or the large homeschool family dressed as the Fruit of the Spirit, which felt unfair since they had nine children (wowzers) and I only have two sisters (what were our options—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?).

Boys on the other hand, in my opinion, had so many more options. They could come as David with an awesome slingshot, Noah with a basketful of stuffed animals, or even Jesus! And let's be honest, it almost feels wrong to beat someone who dresses up as Jesus.

One year, at the ripe age of ten, I was determined to win. I tried to think big and break the mold because I had my heart set on walking away with that year's prize: a twenty-dollar gift card to Toys "R" Us, which would go toward my dream purchase of a Nintendo Game Boy and my desire to dominate at Tetris. So, I pitched idea after idea to my parents with little avail. They vetoed my idea of going as Eve with some well-placed leaves, and they could not figure out how to construct a Tower of Babel, even though I had architecture plans ready to go. After returning to the drawing board, I decided that if I could not beat the boys, then I would join them. I would dress up as John the Baptist.

Let me tell you, I went all out that year. I found some strange matted fur in my grandmother's closet that we molded into clothing. I ratted my hair, drew on a beard, found a jar of honey and a giant walking stick, and perfected my best imitation of a manly stride. When I walked into the Hallelujah Night, I noticed the stares. I'm not sure if people were amazed or horrified at how well I'd transformed into the wild man from the wilderness. I'm proud to say that I won the costume contest with honey in hand, ignoring the snickers from jealous boys and beating out a fierce Samson and someone covered in plastic frogs, attempting to be a plague.

But I didn't walk away that night with only a Toys "R" Us gift card. I also walked away from that experience with a gnawing in my gut that there had to be more stories about brave and courageous women in the Bible. Although I couldn't fully articulate it at the age of ten, I felt sad that there weren't more dress-up options for me as a girl. I loved Ruth, Deborah, Mary, and Esther, but these women seemed tame and were so few in comparison to David, Noah, Joshua, Moses, Peter, Paul, Gideon, Samson, Jacob, Abraham, Jonah, and John (care for me to go on?). Where were the women? Were they all busy

inside tents with food and babies? Were there any women present during Jesus's ministry that I didn't know about? Were there any "wild" women who were bold and brave, maybe not as crazy as wilderness-wandering-and-locust-eating John the Baptist, but women who were desperate for an encounter with the man from Nazareth? Women a little like me?

This preacher's kid grew up, went to college and seminary, got married, read through the Gospels a few times, and wound up working in her dad's church (even judging the chili cook-off at our Hallelujah Night, which was renamed Family Fall Fest to stay relevant). I remained on the lookout as I opened my Bible for brave women to learn from, and although I've been captivated by the stories of Mary, Martha, Jael, and Anna the prophetess, more often than not, I kept circling back to the stories of women who didn't appear to get a lot of airtime but who obviously had significant and even life-altering encounters with the Savior.

Years ago, I wrote a Bible study and included a lesson from the life of the woman with the issue of blood. After that teaching session, a lady named Michelle mentioned to me that she was captivated by women like the one I'd just taught on—women who were without a name, nameless women, in Scripture. She was currently diving deep into 2 Kings 4 and the miraculous story of Elisha when he encountered a poor widow on the brink of losing her sons to creditors. As Michelle shared her excitement, I couldn't shake the phrase *nameless women*, and I realized that I too was drawn to their stories! These brave women littered my sermons and made me pause as I read the Bible because their faith and willingness to be a little "wild" was flat-out inspiring. Stories like that of the woman with the issue of blood caused me to think about determined faith, and the story of the Syrophoenician woman, who broke numerous cultural boundaries as she begged at the

table of Jesus, gripped me and caused me to take inventory of my own life. Had I ever been as desperate as these nameless women for a touch from Jesus?

As I pondered that conversation with Michelle, I decided to revisit these stories, especially the ones found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—the stories of nameless women who met Jesus face-to-face. As I studied, I wrestled with the simple fact that these women were somewhat anonymous. Their identity was hidden, their background left to our imagination, and their future a mystery. In some ways, this frustrated me. Their anonymity highlights the marginalization of women during Bible times, and in all honesty, my research of these women began with plenty of arguments with God, asking Him, *Why don't they even get a name in here?!*

But as I continued to dive into these stories and preach about them in various situations, I found my indignation lessening and hope rising as I saw over and over how their namelessness didn't define them: Jesus didn't see these women as a quota or photo op but rather drew near to them with love and freedom. These stories are in the Bible for a reason. They aren't throwaway moments, even if the women remain unnamed to this day. If anything, I find these women are reflections of the anonymous and sometimes hidden lives many women lead today.

We've all been there, whether standing in a crowd of people or alone in our homes, wondering if what we do matters. We feel nameless—overwhelmed and overlooked. We stand in the shadow of our Mount Everest laundry piles or look at the paper that litters our desks, wondering if anyone actually knows or cares about our day, our life. We open Instagram in hopes of validation or at least distraction but wind up in despair as the merry-go-round of pretty faces and perfect homes leaves us feeling small and unimportant. We find our-

selves teetering on a balance beam of wanting to scream out something profound yet questioning the significance of our voice. We look around our hurting world, hoping our little light is making a difference yet feeling that light flicker more than shine.

We want to be known.

We want to make Him known.

But we question. We question our significance and overanalyze how to live in a way that is both authentic and impactful. We spend time rehashing old rejections, remembering when we stood before the in-crowd receiving cold shoulders instead of open arms. Or we opt for numbness, choosing to binge a new show or navigate our days on autopilot, because let's be honest, it's easier to fake a smile than to feel the grief attached to dead dreams and unmet expectations. We also listen to the lies of the enemy that say we have little to offer beyond making sandwiches and carpooling kids, assisting others and working behind the scenes, whispers that point out our flaws and failures while highlighting the accolades of others.

And yet, even with this list of sad stories and what-if scenarios that takes up space in our brains, *we still hope*. You've picked up this book because even in the questions, I know there is a flicker of hope deep within you that your life matters and is seen by a good God. Like me, you are tired of living on a seesaw of emotions, unsure of what you'll feel next. You are ready for security and truth and clarity on who you are.

As I talk to women at my church and around the country, I'm finding many who are desperate to connect with the Lord in a fresh and personal way. Women want to learn to hear the voice of Jesus, to experience His presence, and to know Him in a tangible, settled way that reminds us that though the earth may quake, there is One who is constant—and He knows us by name.

Isaiah 43:1–3 (emphasis added) is a beautiful promise directed to the nation of Israel, and I believe it is a reflection of God's heart toward us today:

“Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you.
I have called you by name; you are mine.
When you go through deep waters,
I will be with you.
When you go through rivers of difficulty,
you will not drown.
When you walk through the fire of oppression,
you will not be burned up;
the flames will not consume you.
For I am the LORD, your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”

On the days we feel disoriented, forgotten, or face-to-face with a raging fire, we can open the pages of Scripture and find that these promises are not words flung randomly in the wind, but they literally embody the person of Jesus. Jesus went out of His way to pause, to listen to, and to redeem marginalized women. They were nameless women, walking through deep waters of difficulty and fires of oppression, and He was there. He knew them and called them His own.

If Jesus went out of His way to listen to nameless women in the Gospels, then He is listening to us today.

He is listening to you.

This book is an exploration of what it means to be seen, heard, and known by Jesus. We will look at seven different encounters in the Gospels where Jesus connects with nameless women, deeply examining the stories that changed their lives. I weave my own personal stories throughout these gospel narratives because I believe Jesus not only spoke to these women,

but He is moving and speaking to women today. As you read about His interactions with me, my friends, and women like the widow with two mites, I believe you will get a truer glimpse of how good and loving our God is. These unknown women encountered Jesus in such a beautiful and personal way that they each moved from a posture of dejection and desperation to one of faith and confidence. When these women encountered Jesus, they encountered hope.

Hope is waiting for you too.

A.W. Tozer said, “We can never know who or what we are till we know at least something of what God is.”¹

The truth is that we are known only as we know Him.

This truth became real to me in the spring of 2000. I was engaged and planning my upcoming wedding. When I took a break from choosing cakes and bridesmaid dresses, I found myself melting down with a wise friend over the issue that my name would soon change. Something about that reality not only unsettled me but made me question my identity, purpose, and future. For all my life, I had been Paige White. This name connected me to my parents, my heritage, and I had made Paige White look pretty good! People liked Paige White. *I* liked Paige White. But who would Paige Allen be? This new last name was foreign on my tongue. It felt forced, and although I was ecstatic to marry this man, I just wasn’t so sure about taking his name. This name change represented an unknown future, and at my core I felt like I was being invited to change something essential about myself, but I wasn’t sure if I wanted to accept the invitation. Fears that I’d long covered up surfaced with a vengeance. I started to question my value, my purpose, my friendships, and if I might be making a huge mistake marrying this man who was my exact opposite in

1. A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God: Their Meaning in the Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009), 28.

personality. It was just a name change, and yet it seemed to unlock a door to questions I needed to face.

My wise friend said I had to get a sense of peace about this change and encouraged me to stop the mind games and try to ask God what was going on at a deeper level. I left her office and found myself in a rose garden, sitting on a section of steps surrounded by hundreds of thorny stems that had yet to bloom. Determined not to leave that garden until I had some sort of answer, I paced, journaled, cried, and found myself asking the Lord about more than a name change—I was actually asking Him about *my* identity. When the questions dried up and I sat with an open heart and unclenched fists, the Holy Spirit gently spoke to my heart. His words were simple. “Paige, you are my child.”

These five words were plain yet revelatory because they were spoken directly to my heart. With the name *child*, I felt as if God was imparting security and a sense of belonging that transcended any name change I might face. I was waking up to an uncomplicated identity that carried weight because it was attached to a good God who had things under control. More than Paige White versus Paige Allen, I was His child. He knew my name. That reality carried substance, purpose, and an authority I knew He was inviting me to discover.

Although a name change still sounded strange to my ear, I left the garden that day with an expectation that something really good was around the corner. I was excited to get to know Paige Allen, and I had an awareness that in order to settle into my identity as God’s child, I needed to discover Him as my Father. It was as if I had a promise that if I’d continue to lean into His voice, scour His Word, and get to know Him, my identity would only grow.

That year of engagement became one of encountering the Lord as my Father and seeing this promise of a secured identity bloom in my life. I read the Bible with new eyes, and as I read

verses like Romans 8:15, “Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, ‘Abba, Father,’” I had aha moments when I not only gained greater knowledge of who God is as My Father but also became more confident in who I was as His child. It was connected! Discovering the name of God as Father allowed me to move into a new season with joy and freedom as His child.

We become known as we get to know Him.

Now, as a culture, we love to focus on ourselves, and most people are on a quest to gain greater clarity on their identity. We want to feel known, and many of us want to *be* known. It’s a different story, but even my eleven-year-old asked for her own YouTube channel for Christmas. We resist the concept of a nameless existence, which is why the self-help industry brings in over eleven billion dollars each year. I love a good self-help book, but I’ve also experienced the reality that running after mantras or new habits often leaves me wanting, and there is nothing that solidifies a sense of being known quite like discovering in greater detail the One who created me.

Each of the nameless gospel women that we explore in this book has her own movement moment where she transitions from an unsure, hidden woman in the background of the story into a woman who is seen, valued, and in many instances sent out to transform her world. The pivotal point within each narrative is the life-giving encounter she has with Jesus. As I began to study these stories, it was as if I began to see within each one a new aspect of Jesus, an attribute or “name,” if you will, that was on full display in the interactions He had with each anonymous woman. And as I watched these nameless women transform within a span of a few verses, it got me to thinking:

What would happen if we, if you, took the time to discover who God really is? Could transformation in our lives (like that of the nameless women) be as simple as seeing and

encountering Jesus in a new light? What would life look like if we actually believed that He is the God who sees us? How would we parent or treat our friends if we had a radical revelation that He is our shepherd and advocate? Might our worries and fears be lessened with the soul-deep belief that He alone is our peace and protector? Would we no longer feel nameless? Would we stop caring so much about being known? Would we begin to use our voices? Could we, like the woman at the well, wind up transforming a community?

This book is broken into seven sections that take a closer look at seven brave but anonymous women who encountered Jesus in the Gospels. Each section has two chapters: one that shines a light on the narrative of the nameless woman and one that looks at a name or characteristic of God that Jesus exemplifies in the same story.

We will first look at the story from her perspective. This includes trying to understand what was happening culturally and relating her obstacles or lessons to the modern-day issues we face. Then in the second chapter of each section we will get to know Jesus as shepherd, advocate, living water, Father, and more!

Whether you are surrounded by the masses (maybe you are a famous YouTuber whom my child adores) or reading in your home while little ones tug for your attention, it is my prayer that these words remind you that you are not alone. There have been women who have gone before us who faced disease, poverty, injustice, and shame, and because of *one man* who walked into their world, they were reminded that there is always hope. They were seen by Him. They were set free by Him. They were released into purpose by Him. Some were corrected by Him. All were loved by Him. We don't know their names, but their stories live on, and in His presence they became women whom the whole world would know.

It is also my prayer that you walk away from this book knowing that the Jesus who went out of His way to connect with, heal, and fight for nameless women in the Gospels is the same Jesus who listens and speaks to you today. May the chaos or hiddenness of your current season and the questions of your heart melt away as you meet Jesus in a new way and are awakened to the truth that He knows your name. Because when you are known, it changes everything!

STOP IN THE NAME OF LOVE

The Woman
with the Issue of Blood

Luke 8:40–56

A Woman Reaches

I was pitching this book to potential publishers when I received a concerning call from my dear college friend Angel. Through tears, she told me her marriage was over, she was a horrible mother, and she was questioning the value she brought to her family and any area of life, for that matter. She had battled postpartum depression for a few years now, but her words hit my ears like alarms. They sounded so far from the Angel I knew.

I met Angel my very first day at college. My parents had just said their good-byes, and I found myself in a new city, weeping alone in my new dorm room. I cried for a solid hour before I realized I didn't want to be the sad girl who cries alone in her dorm room. So I wiped my eyes, blew my nose, did a once-over in the mirror, and put on my bravest smile. I stepped into the long hallway and knocked on the door directly across from my room. Imagine my surprise when that door opened up to another girl wiping away her tears and looking at me with a puzzled expression on her face. Her name was Wendy, and

we decided to knock on every door down that long hallway, inviting everyone to go get ice cream.

Angel was only two doors down from my room, and instead of greeting us with tears, we were greeted with blaring '80s music and a smile that lit up the campus. Angel was definitely on board to go get ice cream, and from that day forward, the three of us—Paige, Wendy, and Angel—became a tight-knit crew. All of my best college memories include Wendy and Angel. They helped set me up with my husband, Josh, and we were bridesmaids in one another's weddings. We had more honest conversations over ice cream than I can count, we've gotten into trouble a time or two, and these two are the friends who leave me doubled over in laughter with a side-eye and smirk.

Angel is one of my people. She is my fun friend. She is my brave friend. She is the friend with an inappropriate question ready to go at any minute, and gosh I love it when she asks that question because I'm dying to know the answer too, even if I'm too shy to ask.

So this phone call I received made me sit up, immediately call Wendy, and make plans with her to travel to Tulsa within weeks to go check on our friend. The weekend we arrived was different from other girls' weekends we'd had in the past. This was not a time to sight-see and try new foods—from the moment we got in Angel's car at the airport, we were accosted with tears and rants and the heartache of a friend who felt lost and alone even though she was surrounded by so many who loved her. I was nervous and wasn't sure if I had the answers she sought. We talked and we cried and we talked some more. Angel's words seemed to go in a circle, and I was left frustrated by the way she was thinking. She slept a lot too. She chose to stay in the hotel to nap while Wendy and I got pedicures. She asked if we could go home early after dinner so she could go

to bed, even though we *always* stayed up late when we were together. It was odd. It wasn't the Angel we knew. Something just seemed off. This didn't seem like only marriage troubles or even postpartum depression.

One afternoon as Angel drove down the winding street of Lewis Avenue, she began talking in a shame spiral. She recounted to us the many ways she was failing her family and how she believed she wasn't cutting it in most areas of life. She pulled me into the conversation, comparing her life to my own, wishing that she was the one in ministry and writing books, wondering how her life had gotten so off track from the plans in her mind. I sat next to her in the passenger's seat and turned to face her.

I've been guilty of talking badly about myself, but Angel spoke with venom in her voice, berating every area of her life, and I knew in my spirit it needed to stop. So as she continued to drive with her face pointed forward, I began to recount the Angel I knew. "Angel, I know this is a hard season, but you've got to remember who you are! Let me tell you about who I see when I see you." And I went for it. I reminded her of her infectious laughter and her ability to make everyone feel like they are her best friend. I reminded her of stories of her bravery and how she loves her boys fiercely. I went on and on and on, and as I did, tears silently ran down her face.

She smiled and wiped her tears, thanking me for my kind words, but it was as if she also brushed my words off like crumbs that had landed in her lap. She couldn't take the honest praise in, so the words slid to the floor rather than taking up residence in her heart.

The next day, she dropped Wendy and me off at the airport, and we stood together under the Tulsa sky, scratching our heads and literally saying to one another, "What's really going on? What are we missing?"

Wendy and I decided to send daily text messages to Angel, reminding her of who she is and of God's goodness toward her. And we received nice replies back for a couple of months, but then she went silent.

Isn't silence the worst?

When you are hoping for an answer, silence is deafening and often infuriating. It speaks its own kind of language, and when we listen in, we can hear the voices of our past pointing out some of our greatest fears. That small voice that taps into the old wounds, telling you that you will always be chosen last or that your presence is only needed so long as it is "useful." Silence whispers you're unworthy of that person's time or love, and if we are not careful, we create entire scenarios in our imagination where we stand before the crowds we most want to join and hear the verdict that our presence is unimportant or a nuisance.

Although Angel wasn't trying to send those messages, I received them all the same, and I've realized over the years that anytime I don't receive the feedback I crave, from work or my husband or even my children, I begin to question my value and whether or not anyone sees me for who I really am. I can begin to believe that I'm nothing more than the food I make, the rides I give to children bickering in the backseat, and the events I organize at work. And it doesn't matter if God is sitting next to me in the car, reminding me through His Word that I am beloved, because in order to be known and seen, I must be willing to listen and believe.

Silence wields power not only when it's directed our way but especially when it is forced upon our voice or presence. I'll never forget watching the Oprah interview with Prince Harry and Meghan Markle a few years ago. They were sitting underneath a canopy of flowers, sharing about their time in the royal circles, when Oprah asked Meghan this question:

“Were you silent, or were you silenced?”¹ I made a small gasp because the question hit so close to my heart. There have been times when I felt silenced—asked to step aside or hold my opinion—but there have also been occasions, more than I’d like to admit, when I chose to be silent, to hold back my voice, because I was unsure of how it would be received.

I’m not sure if receiving silence or being silenced causes me more turmoil, but when any type of silence creeps in, I tend to look for an exit, or just some way to fill the gap. In Angel’s life, I would later discover that the silence was a result of a hidden battle with demons I cannot fathom. So the silence was not a message for me so much as a consequence of her pain and shame. I saw her actions as her giving me the silent treatment, when in reality she was being silenced by an enemy I had yet to encounter.

I know that I’m not the only woman frustrated by silence. I’ve sat with young women from conservative denominations who have cried about the fact that they are unwelcome to use their voice when they have so much to offer. I have run alongside women who have secret desires to start a business or ministry but believe their husbands or extended families only see them as capable of spending money and cooking food. I have cuddled my own daughters as tears pooled in their eyes after hearing through the grapevine that they were excluded from an invitation, wondering what they were lacking in order to be invited into the cool crowd. What about you? What is harder—receiving silence or feeling that you need to be silent?

I often wonder how many unnamed women in Scripture felt enraged yet helpless at the reality that their existence was

1. “Prince Harry, Meghan reveal struggles behind royal rift in Oprah interview,” YouTube video, 0:22, posted by CBS News: The National on March 7, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wx4Vpm1KzSY>.

often silenced. They had little to no voice in whom they would marry, or in any gifts and talents they held beyond their ability to birth and raise children. They had no voice when it came to financial decisions, and their very existence was considered expendable—especially when there was no male relative willing to advocate for them.

We see this issue play out so clearly in the story of the woman with the issue of blood, found in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This woman is alone, rejected, sidelined, and without any male relative to fight for her. She is also nameless. This woman most likely was handed down a looming sentence of isolation and embarrassment. According to Leviticus 15:25, she is deemed “unclean” for as long as she continues to bleed. She has racked up twelve years so far, and the Bible tells us that she’s shelled out every penny to her name, desperate to find a cure. But even though she may be broke on this day that we meet her in Scripture, she is also determined to find a way to break free from this unending cycle of despair and pain.

The reality that the world has turned its back on her is specifically displayed in great detail in Luke’s recounting of her story, found in Luke 8:40–56. Her story is sandwiched inside the story of another woman, a girl really, a girl the same age as the number of years this woman has bled, a twelve-year-old girl.

Side note—when you see similar parallels or details like this in the Bible, like this woman who has bled for twelve years and a little girl who is only twelve years old, *it’s not a coincidence*. It’s an invitation to stop and examine. Are there any other similarities between these two nameless women? What about any differences?

You know what stands out most to me as I compare these two women side by side? Although they share the same gender

and the number twelve in their descriptions, I believe the truth is that these two women could not be more different.²

The little girl came from a wealthy and well-known family. In fact, we discover that her father was not nameless. He is known. He is Jairus. His was a name that people recognized and revered. He was a ruler of the synagogue, a righteous man. I wonder if he was one who helped hand down the sentence to the woman who bled, so that she must live her days away from those she loved.

I'm not sure if he was a kind and just ruler, but we do get a glimpse of the fact that he is a good father. His little girl is sick, and in a society when girls were sometimes discarded, he was willing to humble himself, literally falling to the ground in a manner that rulers would eschew, to fight for his daughter's life. He pleads with Jesus, acknowledging His authority in the midst of both fanfare and skepticism among his community, and asks for help. He's willing to fight and beg for his daughter. This little girl has a man in her corner. She has a dad who loves her.

In contrast, the woman who bleeds has no one. No one to fight, no one to beg, no man in sight. She is alone. It is silent. And so she musters up her own strength and pushes through that loud and restless crowd. I envision her giving herself the best Brené Brown pep talk about vulnerability and courage as she presses through the throngs of people. She has one small mission: to touch His clothing. Get in and get out. Hope for healing but stay under the radar.

And she does it! Scripture says that she touches the hem of Jesus's garment and is immediately healed. She feels the

2. I heard about this idea of comparing the woman with the issue of blood and Jairus's daughter from Dwayne Weehunt, founder of SOS International. He preached a life-changing message about these two women over a decade ago as I sat in a room filled with young women in the nation of India. I've studied and preached on this passage from this comparison and contrast angle on several occasions, but this transformative truth originated from him. Thank you, Dwayne.

bleeding stop. Can you imagine the relief and overwhelming joy that must have broken through the walls built up to protect her heart from another disappointment? She is healed! She can breathe. She can hope.

She begins to pull away, to try to blend back in with the crowd, when Jesus asks, “Who touched me?” And no one answers. Silence.

She shuts her mouth and looks around. Remember, she’s not even supposed to be here. She has been labeled unclean, so anyone who touched her or came into her presence has been defiled. If it’s discovered that she has broken out of her isolation, the ramifications no doubt would be devastating. And so she is silent. Eyes darting, heart pounding, mind racing, she is trying to sort out what is about to happen.

Jesus stops. He is not moving on. Peter tries to break the awkwardness like any good extrovert, reminding Jesus that a lot of people have touched Him. But Jesus is insistent. This touch was different.

Silence.

We aren’t told how long the silence lasts, but in that silence, I believe something shifts.

The silences of God are always different from the silences of man. My friend Eric says, “God is always doing more than one thing at a time.” God is unlimited by time and space, but more importantly, He sees beyond surface need to the deep places of our hearts. And when we are in the midst of pain or loss or even silence, He is at work.

I believe Jesus was at work that day, and although the woman had a simple agenda of getting physical healing from Him, He had an additional plan of bringing her healing at a soul level.

As this woman fights for herself, alone, desperate, and in the literal shadow of a good daddy fighting for his daughter, Jesus stops her because He has more.

When she realizes she can't stay hidden, she breaks the silence, and in complete vulnerability in front of a crowd of people, she tells Jesus her story. Her sickness, her rejection, and her determination to touch Him in order to be healed. I imagine her with tears running down her cheeks, rambling nervously as she told her story. I know I would.

And when all of her words are used up, Jesus responds. His words are simple, but look closely at how He begins: "Daughter."

He calls her *daughter*.

And with one simple word, He trades her issue for identity. She is given a name. He fills the silence with comfort. She is *His daughter*. Like the sick little girl whose loving father still stands at Jesus's side, she too now has someone in her corner. His name is Jesus. He aligns Himself with her and calls her His own. And with this new name, Jesus brings another layer of healing to her soul.

He also makes a statement to her community. She is not to be rejected, and she is no longer alone. She has a man who will fight for her. A man who will stop crowds for her. A man who calls her daughter. A daughter has a place in a family, a seat at the table, and a connection with others that cannot be broken. She is no longer to be placed on the outskirts of her community. She belongs.

If you learn nothing else from the nameless women in the Gospels, let this truth sink down into the vulnerable places of your heart—Jesus sees you, is willing to stop the noise for you, and gives you the name your heart most needs to hear.