



WOMEN WHO PRIZE
BEING FOUND IN CHRIST

Defining What Defines Us

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Have you ever noticed we tend to let our peaks and valleys define our seasons? It's like we're stuck on a never-ending, lightning-fast roller-coaster of ups and downs. Sometimes, we're in an "up" season that spans weeks or months, and then we plummet into a "down" season and camp out there for X amount of days. Other times, we experience more ups and downs in 24 hours than our mind can even begin to process.

For me, a victory season, an "up" season, is when I am getting invited to all the 'right' events, hanging out with all the 'right' people, and kicking my to-do lists' butt! **I feel more loved, appreciated, important, and like I can conquer the world during these times.** I peak when I'm successful in all my endeavors, words of affirmation are flowing my way, and my wall (or closet shelf) is collecting degrees and accolades. I'm at the top of my game, and I know it. Everything feels effortless - nothing can stop me!

We all chase after these seasons of victory. **We do this because we find our value and worth in accomplishments.** The problem is, we eventually have to come down from the peak. We are going to face trials, life will get messy, we won't always be on our A-game, and that effortlessness will evaporate. **Or worse, we achieve a perfect week, yet we still fill empty.**

How do we reconcile our identity when the inevitable valley approaches?

First, we need to settle this in our hearts – **it's true, your failures don't define you, but you also need to know your victories don't define you either!**

As Christians, we tend to give a disproportionate level of attention to convincing people they aren't defined by their sins, failures, or perceived inequities. We are continually finding new ways to show those who are bound by rejection, insecurity, self-doubt, shame, anxiety, fear, and so much more, that they are loved, and called, and made whole. We claim victory and prosperity over them in Jesus' name – but I don't think we take enough time to explain how **victories- worldly achievement, confidence, and #killingit can be just as harmful if they are not rooted in the Lord.**

The word victory is used forty-four times in the Bible, and each time we see that **victory comes from the Lord.** That tells us, understanding where victory comes from is essential.

John 15:4-5 *Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.*

We are instructed to remain in Christ no matter our circumstances, no matter our feelings!

The life of Paul is a powerful example of this. In Philippians 4:11-13 Paul explains (from prison) to the church at Philippi that he has learned to find contentment apart from his situation.

"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want."

Even though Paul was writing from a valley at this time, that was not always the case. Paul's list of accomplishments was impressive! He helped plant at least fourteen churches (and let me say, as a part of a church plant myself, I can attest to what an accomplishment that was), he preached to thousands, and he traveled all over the world sharing the gospel and healing in the Lord's name. Not to mention the thirteen books he contributed to the New Testament. **His life was full of victory, yet he didn't define his life by his achievements.** Instead, we see Paul learned to look to the Lord in the down seasons and to give glory to Lord in the up seasons.

When we find our victory in Jesus, we are not subject to the rollercoaster of emotions tied to world-defined victories. His heart toward us is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He loves us and calls us victorious when we stick to every new year's resolution, and He loves us and calls us victorious when we don't. We must steady ourselves in who we are in Christ.

There's nothing wrong with celebrating accomplishments, but let's step off the roller-coaster by finding our identity in the God-secured victory we already have because of Jesus!

You are not defined by your failures OR by your victories. You are defined by Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:57 *But we thank God for giving us the victory as conquerors through our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One.*

conversation starters

1. How do you most often define yourself – **through failures or victories**? Can you give examples of times when you have done so?
2. Have you ever felt the pressure to perform and attain victory to prove to others or yourself that you are worth it?
3. What role does failure play in your life (fear of failure, feeling like a failure, failure is a learning opportunity, etc.)
4. Has chasing a victory ever let you down? For example: you worked hard for the promotion you wanted, but once you achieved it, you didn't feel as fulfilled as you thought you would.
5. What does finding your identity and victory in God look like in your life – and what practical steps do you need to take to truly believe it?

his heart work

Study: Read Ephesians 6 in its entirety and in several different translations. Spend time learning more about the armor God has given to us to help us stand our ground.

Act: When Satan comes at you with one of his schemes, don't sit down and participate in a meeting of the minds. Stand. Get up and fight. Fight FROM the victory God has won for you. Sing your heart out to "Not Today" and start throwing punches. Share your victories with your small group!

prayer needs

Write down the prayer requests of your group members, and pray fervently for them! Let your group members know when you are praying for them, if you have any scriptures or encouraging words for them, etc.