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DAY 1

BEFORE

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine."

ISAIAH 43:1

Every follower of Jesus has a not-so-great "before": A rash, brash fisherman. A pious, fancy-pants religious leader. A thieving, indifferent-to-suffering tax collector. A demon-possessed woman so insignificant that her "before" isn't even recorded and we're left to surmise what it might've been.

And yet God calls people in the "before"—when they aren't even aware they're simply broken versions of themselves. God calls people *before* He begins His transformative work of redemption because He sees past the "before" to what He purposed and planned. He sees past the "before" to those He loves enough to call His own.

Take Israel, for example.

Isaiah prophesied over God's chosen nation—"Fear not, for I have redeemed you" (Isaiah 43:1)—not during a time of obedience but during their rebellion. A time filled with idol worship and wandering hearts and intense callousness to sin, not to mention all the painful consequences they were experiencing as a result of their choices. It was spoken long before their repentance.

"I have called you by name, you are mine," he continues in verse 1. When Isaiah spoke those words, Israel was rebelling against all God had done for them and all He wanted to do. But God didn't turn away—He showed mercy. He spoke His love over His chosen people, claiming them as His own before they agreed to be.

He entered into the "before."

God speaks what is true over us too; His plan of redemption is on the march, because He has called us by name. Our choices don't derail His. What we see when we look in the mirror doesn't determine what He sees or who we'll be by His hand, and so our brokenness doesn't alter His plans. Nor do circumstances, other people, or our own choices determine our value; our value is assigned by the one we belong to.

So we don't have to fear.

Fear not, you're not who you're going to be. Fear not, God can redeem your choices and use them for good. Fear not, God can heal your heart, your body,

your relationships. Fear not, you were made for more than what you've experienced so far. Fear not, this is only the beginning.

Every follower of Jesus has a not-so-great "before." But every follower of Jesus also has an "after." The rowdy fisherman became the bedrock preacher of the early church, healer of the sick and lame, and fearless unto death. The leader of impersonal religion became personal friends with Jesus, finally understanding and being changed by the Scriptures he'd devoted his life to studying. The taxman traitor became a member of the elite twelve and author of the first Gospel of the New Testament. And the woman? The woman too insignificant to even have her "before" recorded was so precious to Jesus that she became the first person He appeared to after He rose from the dead, the first one to hear His tender voice, and the first witness of the culmination of all He claimed to be and do—and she got to tell the boys.

PRAYER FOCUS

Thank the Father for knowing your name and calling it—and for identifying you as His. Thank Him for redeeming you from your "before," then ask Him to help you through any remaining challenges.

MOVING FORWARD

- o What parts of your “before” has God redeemed, and which are you most grateful for?
- o How does “I have called you by name, you are mine” impact you today?
- o What do you fear, and how does Isaiah 43:1—this declaration made by God to His chosen ones—affect your fear?