

When I was asked to have a conversation with Pastor Nicole surrounding the topic of Joy on her podcast, I didn't hesitate to say yes! So much of my life story has been painful, yet has always produced the fruit of joy. It's an easy topic for me since I consider myself an all around joyful person. I love to laugh, I know my days are numbered, and I continually press on to stay thankful even through the hard days. I was so honored to be able to share some of my story with you all, and if you haven't listened yet, I encourage you to do so! Little did I know that a couple weeks after we recorded our conversation, I faced yet another challenge that took me by surprise and threw me off my feet (quite literally).

On April 8th I was walking into the Friday morning Women's Group at The House Church when I slipped and took a hard fall on my right leg. I heard and felt a "crack" when I fell and I immediately knew it was a serious injury as I could not get back up. Time stopped for a moment as women of faith surrounded me with love, prayer, and care. The pain was excruciating so I was taken to the ER and admitted to the hospital to have surgery that evening. The surgery was successful as they put a rod and screws in to fix my fractured tibia. The doctors prepared me for a 12 week to 6 month recovery. I was devastated. I didn't plan for this! I didn't feel the rush of God's Presence and I had a hard time hearing His voice at that moment, but I knew He was with me. How did I know this? Because He's never left me. I can look back on every high and low moment of my life and see His faithful hand upon me and His steadfast love towards me. I didn't have the strength to clearly see why this had happened or what I should be doing during this time. All I knew was that my world came to a halting stop. My routine was disrupted as I was forced to lay in bed and focus on rest and healing for the foreseeable future.

I am so thankful for all the people that showed up with tangible love and care through providing meals, prayers, and even financial support. It has been pretty incredible to see the body of Christ come together when one is hurting. I'll never forget this time of others' care! However, along with the support of others came the brutal reality that I was alone. Eventually my husband went back to work and I was faced with being alone for hours every day. My personality has had a hard time with this. I'm typically very busy meeting with people and maintaining a full social schedule. All of that had stopped. What do I do now? To be honest, I'm still figuring that out and learning what true rest looks like.

One heart lesson I've been reminded of in this time is my identity as a daughter. When the rat race of life slows down and I have nothing to give, who am I? The Lord so graciously reminded me of my importance to Him simply as His child first and foremost. What I do is not who I am. When everything stops or if everything is full speed ahead, I can rest assured that I am enough as His daughter! Everything else flows from that place of security and confidence in Him. I challenge you to imagine yourself in a similar circumstance. When the things of this world are stripped away, what are we left holding on to? Who are you to Him?

There has been a theme running through my heart and mind during this time of recovery, and that is, "To whom else would I go?" (John 6:68-69) I don't say that as if there are no other options, I say it as knowing that Jesus is everything to me. My faith has been tested in this trial, but at the end of the day I keep holding on, because, to whom else would I go? Nothing and no

one in this life brings the peace, hope, joy, and life that Jesus does. Everything temporal will fade away, but the eternal things will remain (2 Corinthians 4:18). It's all found in Him! So, in the midst of hardship, trial, and difficult circumstances, we can hold on to Jesus as our true hope and steadfast savior. He is everything!

Lastly, I wanted to share with you how important it is to remember the Lord's faithfulness. It was perfect timing when the podcast with Pastor Nicole came out, because I needed that word for myself! I didn't know at the time of the recording what was going to come my way, but I was incredibly surprised at how much I needed the strength of that word in my current situation. I have felt weak and have had a hard time finding joy. But then I look back and remember. I remember how the Lord has always provided a way for me when there was no way. I remember how He physically healed me and then restored my heart of brokenness in grief. I remember how He has always come through at just the right time. Even if I couldn't see it in the moment, I can look back and clearly see He was with me. He is always with me.

He's with you, too! In this very moment, He sees you, He knows you, He loves you, and He's cheering you on (Romans 8:34)! I share the present moment of my journey with you to hopefully bring some encouragement to your own journey. One thing that has helped me process through the storms of life is transparency. It is being honest with myself, with God, and with others. Not all parts of our story are beautiful, but all of it will be made beautiful (Ecclesiastes 3:11)!

Take a moment to pause and reflect today. *Ask the Lord how He sees you* and who you are to Him. *Consider the things of Heaven* and how you can fix your eyes on Jesus in the midst of your circumstance. *Remember His faithfulness*, look back on your own story and see the moments where He has always been there for you! Bonus challenge: *find someone to share your story with*. Either a time that the Lord came through for you recently, or how you can see Him working in your life right now! There is so much joy and encouragement that comes from the body connecting with the body!

Thank you for taking the time to read through this, I hope it has brought an infusion of hope to your heart and mind! I have so much love in my heart for the women of The House! I look forward to seeing you all in person soon. :) Blessings!