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Chapter 1: Lost and Found (1996-2007)

As a child, I was practically born in the church. My dad was the youth pastor at FBC Oxford and my mom served as Children's Choir director, so it's safe to say I spent more time at church than at home. I heard the name Jesus almost more than my own, and I can't remember a time in my life when I didn't think there was some sort of God out there somewhere. Though I had heard the name of Jesus so often, it wasn't until I was eight years old that I decided to follow Him. I remember laying in my bed one night in the fall of 2004, just rambling to God and feeling His presence. I remember after that conversation I felt different, and soon after that I asked my dad about baptism because I knew that was what I was supposed to do next. On January 2, 2005, my dad baptized me, and I told everyone in my class at school that I decided to follow Jesus. I was so excited, but because I was so young, I couldn't truly comprehend what following Jesus meant. In May 2007, I experienced my first test of faith. My parents told my brother and I that we were moving to Peru. I was devastated. Surely God was kidding, how could a God who loved me so much ask me to sacrifice my friends, my house, and my church? I cried myself to sleep that night, begging God to change His mind. It felt like too much for my ten-year-old self to bear, but I didn't really have a choice.

Chapter 2: Trials (2008-2011)

Before we could officially move to Peru, we spent a year in Costa Rica learning Spanish. I was harboring anger against God, and while I still believed He was there, we just weren't on great terms. But despite my stubbornness, He was faithful and provided friends who I still consider family today, language skills, and through a ministry called La Carpio, I got my first taste of ministry. La Carpio provided me with my first chance to speak to other children my age in Spanish, children not like myself in skin color or culture. This was my first chance to either embrace or reject my role in my parents' calling. I chose to embrace it, and as the year in Costa Rica passed by and we transitioned into Peru, I fell in love with all of the adventures that the mission field brought. God became "good" to me again. But around my 14th birthday, I faced a new challenge that neither I nor my parents ever imagined. After a lot of pain in my fingers, feet and knees, I discovered that I suffered from Rheumatoid Arthritis. I felt once again like God was taking something away from me, but this time it wasn't a place it was my physical health. I didn't understand it. I was doing everything I thought was right. I didn't deserve this. My parents were ready to move back to the states if I wanted to, but I chose to stay in Peru because I no longer identified with the States. My decision to stay had little to do with wanting to serve the Lord and more about wanting to stay in my comfort zone. I didn't identify with the States anymore, and my desire to fit in kept me in Peru. But right when I thought I was settled, I was once again confronted with the pain of leaving a place that I loved. Later that same year, my parents told my brother and I that we were moving to Oaxaca, Mexico. Once again, I was that little girl crying in her bed at night. How could God be this cruel? I felt betrayed and angry.

Chapter 3: Mexico (2012-2015)

My first few months in Mexico were miserable. On top of going through the worst of the teenage years and struggling with my arthritis, I went through the same cycle that I did when I was ten. I kept God at a distance, but this was different than before. Before, I was mostly upset at my parents, but this time I was mad at God. He seemed to bring me a lot more harm than good, and I wasn't sure I wanted to trust Him anymore. I felt as though He didn't care about my feelings and I was just an afterthought. But it's hard to stay far away from The Lord when you see Him working in people's lives all around you. Though it started out as my parents making me work alongside them, serving the Lord made Him even more real to me than before. I began to

intentionally serve The Lord because I wanted to, not just to please my parents. Because I was older, I had more independence, so I could become involved in ministry in a whole new way. I served as a children's Sunday School teacher and worship leader for my church, I translated for teams without my parents, and soon enough Mexico became home. The Lord even provided friends who I still talk to regularly and consider family. To this day, I still consider Mexico my home because it was the place where my faith was solidified. But as always seems to happen, God once again called me to move away from home, but this time I would be going by myself.

Chapter 4: Discovering My Calling (2015-Now)

The cycle of my life up to this point revolved around God calling my parents, but as I graduated high school and moved to the U.S. for college, I had to really grapple with the Lord's calling on my own life. I was convinced that He was calling me back to the mission field, specifically back to Mexico. I could still see such a need to tell people in Mexico about Jesus, and I was convinced that I was the one to do it. I came to Mississippi College with the intent of studying English Education so that I could go back to Mexico and teach missionary kids to support myself. I had a boyfriend of three years that I planned on marrying, and my life plan seemed to line up perfectly. I resented the church in the U.S. because I compared them to churches in Mexico and Peru where Christians were killed and kicked out of their homes for their faith. I thought Christians in the U.S. were all selfish and privileged, and I wanted nothing to do with them. But God took my prideful attitude and humbled me until I could do nothing but rely on Him. My life pretty much fell to pieces within a span of two months. My boyfriend dumped me, I realized I hated teaching in a classroom, and my parents moved back to the U.S. for good. I was overwhelmed with grief, and I blamed God for it. After those awful two months, I spent a semester studying abroad in London. I was ready to get away to a completely new place and "take a break from God". I struggled with depression and thoughts of self-harm, and I didn't open my Bible or speak to God. After about a month of this, I realized that instead of finding freedom I was really just becoming a bitter and lonely person. About halfway through that semester, I reached my breaking point and cried out to God for help while sitting in the bathroom floor of our hotel. This was one of the most intimate moments I've ever experienced with God. It was as though I could physically feel Him holding me, forgiving me and reminding me of His love and grace. I stayed there, humbled before the Lord for almost an hour, and that moment changed me. I was finally ready to let go of my parents' calling and find my own, and when I returned from London, I was a new person. I realized that I was called to ministry, and I began to explore that call by getting involved in my church and with the BSU at MC. Through BSU, The Lord has placed a love for college ministry on my heart, and my time being on the Lead Team has been one of the most rewarding parts of my college experience. I also spent summer in Vancouver, interning with a church on a university campus called The Point. While there, I was exposed to new people and perspectives on Christianity that I had never considered before, and it changed my whole outlook on ministry. I learned there that the most important thing in ministry is love, and while that sounds cliché, the gospel is as simple as that--Loving others the way Christ loved us and not worrying about having the biggest numbers. I've implemented that strategy in my position on BSU Lead Team, and I've seen the Lord bring people to us that otherwise wouldn't have come. My last two years at MC have been a complete turnaround from where I began, and though my faith journey has been a wild ride thus far, every trial has grown my faith stronger. Without going through periods of doubt, I know my faith would be as strong as it is today. As I continue to grow in my own faith, I'm so grateful that the Lord has called me to help others grow in theirs.

