

## Preface

WHEN I WAS ABOUT sixteen, a pastor told me to be less assertive and strong because otherwise I'd never find a husband. Mom says I came home saying I couldn't deny who I really was in order to please others.

But my husbandless twenties left me wondering about who I was. Not about whether I was assertive or strong, but about my identity as a woman. I had only understood womanhood in the roles of wife and mother, roles I did not have.

Herein, my journey to find what it means to be a Christian woman is found. There are bits and pieces of the stories that make my life and my womanhood—travel, study, teaching—and bits and pieces of my friends' and students' stories, too. Mostly, it's a guide that helps us understand ourselves as women, using the framework of relationship with God, self, others, and creation.

It's a flexible framework. Its purpose is to inspire you to think, not to tell you to change yourself to please others. In fact, as you read, I hope that you realize being a woman is simply figuring out how to fully be yourself, not fulfilling some kind of “womanly role.”

May these pages help answer your identity questions.

May these pages encourage and empower you to fully be *yourself*.

May Holy Spirit fire restore the Divine Image in you, woman of God!