

RADIANT

Priscilla Shirer

CONTENT SAMPLER

UNEDITED MANUSCRIPT

NOT FINAL INTERIOR DESIGN

Copyright © 2019 by Priscilla Shirer
All rights reserved.
Printed in the United States of America

978-1-5359-4987-3

Published by B&H Publishing Group
Nashville, Tennessee

SAMPLER
NOT FOR RESALE

INTRODUCTION

Hello, My Name Is . . .

I once gave myself a new name.

And, no, I'm not joking.

After attending a private Christian school from kindergarten through eighth grade, I transferred to a nearby public school for my freshman year, where almost none of the other students or any of the teachers knew me. And at the last minute, I decided it would be a fun experiment to change my name.

So I did.

I decided not to be “Priscilla” anymore.

Somehow, it made perfect sense in my teenage mind to change my name to something else—something cooler, I thought, something quirkier—a clever nickname I decided I wanted to be called by. (I'll spare you the detail of telling you what it is. It would take a whole other chapter to explain what could possibly have seemed intriguing about it.)

I can still see my friend Nicole from the youth group at church, going around that first day helping introduce me to people. We'd pass other kids in the hallway, and she'd say to them, “Hey, y'all, this is Pri—I mean, uh,”—pausing to shoot

me an inquisitive squint, as if to say, *Girl, are we really going through with this?*

Yes, I was.

And, yes, I did.

And guess what? It worked! By the time I graduated, not one teacher, not one student, not one coach or member of the school administration referred to me by any other name than the one I'd handpicked for myself. Even my sports uniforms and letterman's jacket were monogrammed with it. I'd successfully renamed myself. In fact, to this day, if someone ever passes me around town or addresses me on social media by that name, I know it's someone I went to high school with.

Now my parents didn't seem to mind it too much back then—my informal, impromptu decision to be called by another name. I think they saw it as nothing more than a teenage girl thing. A phase. No big deal. But as my senior year began winding down, my mother, who'd mostly held her tongue on how she felt about it, decided she needed to speak up. With an official graduation ceremony approaching in the near future, where she'd be forced to sit and watch me cap my high school career to the sound of a different name than the one she'd given me at birth, she decided she'd kept her opinion to herself long enough. She cornered me in the house one day and, with a "this is your mama speaking" directness to her voice, said: "*Priscilla . . . !*"

Followed by something like this . . .

When I see you walk across that stage at graduation, I'd better not hear or see your little nickname anywhere in the vicinity of your diploma. Because no matter how many people call you that, it is not your name. The only two people who have the right to give you your name are your dad and I. And your name is the one we gave you on the day you were born.

Point made. Not so much loud as clear, though I'm sure I didn't realize its full importance and impact at the time. But I see it now, and here it is: No one else besides the One who made you has the right to give you your name. Not even you have the right to give yourself a name. Any label that is different from the one your heavenly Father gave you is flat-out false.

Only the One who gave you life can give you your identity.

“I have called you by your name,” God said to His people, “you are mine” (Isa. 43:1). You are “precious in my sight and honored, and I love you . . . everyone who bears my name and is created for my glory. I have formed them; indeed, I have made them” (vv. 4, 7).

He has made us. And He has named us.

And His name for you, little sister, is your real and only name. Your identity and significance come from Him. Not what others have said (or haven't said, no matter how

much you've wished they would). Not the mistakes you've made (or haven't made, which may have led you to think too highly of yourself and feel a bit judgmental of others). Not the secret desires you harbor, the weaknesses you've indulged, the abuses you've endured, or even the successes you've achieved.

No, your Father's name for you—the core value that He has placed in you—is the one that eclipses all others and gives you true significance that no one can take away.

But if you're like most people, you've given yourself some names and labels over the years that have gradually become part of how you think about yourself. They're part of the perspective through which you view own life and your future. Maybe, unlike how I did it in high school, you don't go around calling yourself by that name out loud, in public, where everyone can hear you. But in the privacy of your own heart, when no one's around to know any better, you deride yourself with distorted summary statements that contain false readings on who you are, because of what you've done, or how you feel, or experiences you've had.

Or maybe you've simply begun answering to some of the names that other people have had the nerve to hang on you. Hurtful nicknames. Pointed jabs of disrespect and jealousy and ugliness. You hear them; you repeat them; you absorb them; you rehearse them. But if you don't reject them, they mar your sense of identity like chewing gum on the bottom of your shoe. Hard to get off without leaving a smudge.

It's also possible that the name someone calls you may not be particularly hurtful, but it is equally damaging because it swings to the other extreme, coddling your pride and indulging your self-centeredness. I have a friend whose parents consistently referred to her as their "perfect princess" when she was growing up—an endearing, harmless nickname, but one which became problematic when they treated her accordingly. They gratified every whim, caved to every tantrum, and catered to her every wish. She was the spoiled center of the family's universe and became accustomed to receiving every single drop of attention.

Of course all of this felt good to her. None of it was bad or hurtful or hard to deal with. But the whole "princess" thing failed to help balance her sense of humility and compassion toward others. She grew up with an air of pride, superiority, and entitlement that became a major hang-up into adulthood. She lost friends, she cost herself opportunities, and she struggled to find intimacy in her relationship with God—all because she'd been put on a pedestal and figured it was hers to keep forever, that everyone else should treat her like she belonged there too. But over time, she found out the hard way that God didn't exist to serve her. She was His beloved child, yes, but she'd been recreated in Christ Jesus to serve Him. She wasn't perfect. But He was, and she needed Him. She had to climb down from that pedestal, learn about God's real purposes for her life, and realize He wasn't there to grant

her every selfish desire. Her whole life changed when she found out her name.

Names matter.

Your name matters.

The true names given by the One who created you.

Even when . . .

- Ever-changing standards of beauty whisper, you're *Ugly*.
- A teacher who embarrasses you, or a camp counselor who overlooks you, makes you feel *Worthless*.
- The clique that won't accept you or people who refuse to include you communicate that you're *Unwanted*.
- People who laugh at you instead of affirming and celebrating you convince you that you're *Unloved*.
- That guy who won't look at you, or brushes you aside instead of treasuring you, makes you see yourself as *Rejected*.
- The social media feed that haunts you, displaying the lives of more popular, seemingly more perfect people than yourself, makes you feel even more *Invisible*.

- The tears you cry, the hurts you nurse, the wounds you bear deep inside your heart, scream to you that you're *Broken*.
- The secret habit you indulge, again and again, hopeless that you can ever change, continually leaves you feeling *Bound*.
- The coach who keeps nitpicking you, convincing you that you'll never measure up, makes you feel *Inadequate*.
- The circumstances surrounding your birth or, worse, the people who bring it up again to hurt you at your most vulnerable moments, tell you that you're a *Mistake*.
- That horrible thing you did, that terrible sin you committed, sneers at you, shames you, and says you're *Unforgivable*.
- The lust you willingly gave into, or the innocence that evil stole from you, keeps whispering that you are *Impure*.
- "I'm *Stupid*" • "I'm *Forgotten*" • "I'm *Dirty*" • "I'm a *Total Failure*"

Do any of these names sound familiar? Do they echo in your mind? In your heart? In the sound of your own voice?

Or perhaps in the tone of someone else's—someone who should have built you up but chose instead to tear you down?

No matter how you hear them and why you may have chosen to believe them, none of these lies is your true name or identity. Not even one of them. Why? *Because this is not what your Father calls you.* And you are who He says you are.

Point blank. Period.

That's why I've purposely and intentionally called this book *Radiant*, because “those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame” (Ps. 34:5 NIV). That's who you are. And the more you see *why* you're radiant, the more this truth will be able to sustain you. When times are tough, when life disappoints, when struggles abound, when your friends fail, when you question your own significance and purpose—in all these situations and more, you are still exactly who God says you are, and you can accomplish everything He says you can.

God's radiance shines through you, through the uniqueness of you. Everything about the way He's created you, He did it with the purpose of making you a prism for His light. You're like an intricately designed window made of beautiful and unique details, distinct in certain ways from all others. And *through* you, through the carefully constructed window of your life's uniqueness and experiences (even the hard ones), He wants to show Himself to the world.

So all the things that come together to make you a unique package of combinations—your gender as a woman,

your race and culture, the way your body is made, the way your favorite ideas and interests intersect, the good and bad experiences you've had, even the weaknesses you carry around inside you—God planned all these things for a reason. And the reason is because you provide Him a one-of-a-kind outlet for showing His grace and greatness to everyone who sees you.

So I'm calling you to be vigilant and proactive—to be careful and on your guard—or else you'll begin to define yourself differently. You'll label yourself by a flawed narrative. Then your attitudes and behavior will start to reflect it. You'll start living down to your false names instead of rising up into the radiance of who you really are.

It's time to change the frequency, to tune into a different station, one that rings with truth. You need to block out the lies that keep trying to undermine your true stature as a daughter of the King, because your value in Him will never change even when your circumstances do. Knowing and really believing your God-given identity will save you from searching for significance in all the wrong people, positions, and possessions. None of these things can give you worth or lasting value. Only your Father can do that.

Change the narrative. Reprogram your perspective. Rehearse and internalize truth as your weapon against the lies that are so easy to come by. The names that God in His Word has given and ascribed to you are the names you need to answer to and accept as your own.

- *Ugly?*

“Listen, daughter, pay attention and consider . . . and the king will desire your beauty” (Ps. 45:10–11).

- *Worthless?*

“He will redeem them . . . for their lives are precious in his sight” (Ps. 72:14).

- *Unwanted?*

“Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Pet. 2:10)

- *Rejected?*

“You did not choose me, but I chose you.” (John 15:16)

- *Invisible?*

“Where can I go to escape your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? . . . even there your hand will lead me; your right hand will hold on to me.” (Ps. 139:7, 10)

- *Broken?*

“May the God of peace Himself sanctify you through and through [that is, separate you from profane and vulgar things, make you pure and whole and undamaged—consecrated to Him—set apart for His purpose].” (1 Thess. 5:23 AMP)

- *Inadequate?*

“I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.” (Phil. 4:13)

- *Hopeless?*

“Whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope.” (Rom. 15:4)

- *Unforgivable?*

“I am writing to you, little children, since your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.” (1 John 2:12)

- *Horrible? Impure? A Mistake? A Failure?*

“I have been remarkably and wondrously made.” (Ps. 139:14)

You are chosen, accepted, valuable, desired.

This. Is. Who. You. Are.

It’s time to stop calling yourself a name that’s not even yours—never has been; never will be. Today is the day to answer to your Father.

Listen. Do you hear Him calling?

Daughter, you are Mine.

RADIANT