

My Testimony given June 7th, 2026 at Elgin Vineyard Church

Good morning Everyone.

For those of you who may not know me, my name is Jacque. I'm a wife, a mother, an artist, photographer, and designer... but more importantly, I'm a daughter of God.

And honestly, normally I'm the one behind the camera, not standing in front of people speaking into a microphone. I'm much more comfortable capturing other people's stories than sharing my own. So stepping into the spotlight like this is definitely outside my comfort zone.

But I've learned that God often calls us outside of our comfort zones for His purpose and His will.

2 Corinthians 12:9 says, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness."

Sometimes the very places we feel weakest are the places where His strength shines the brightest.

Today I really felt led to build on what Will shared on May 17th about the love of our Father... Abba's love. Because I think so many of us know about God in our heads, but we struggle to truly receive His love in our hearts.

And that was my story for a very long time.

I'm an only child, and growing up I spent a lot of time alone. But honestly, I never really felt alone because Jesus was my friend. I would sit and talk to Him as a child like He was right there beside me. I'd tell Him everything. There was innocence there. There was trust there. I believed He listened.

Jesus said in Matthew 19:14, "Let the little children come to Me... for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

That was me — childlike faith, simple trust.

But somewhere along the way, the enemy got in.

Not loudly at first.

Quietly.

Subtly.

And I began believing one of the greatest lies of my life:

“No one cares what you have to say.”

Jesus said the enemy is “the father of lies” (John 8:44), and that lie took root deep inside me. Fear came with it. Insecurity came with it. And it happened during the years my identity was being formed.

Instead of the voice of God becoming the loudest voice in my life, fear became louder. Insecurity became louder. Performance became louder.

And it sent me down a path.

A path of striving.

A path of pride.

A path of pretending I was okay.

A path of putting on a brave face while silently falling apart inside.

What’s ironic is that I built a career helping other people find their identity through branding, photography, and storytelling... while my own identity was broken.

I could see beauty in everyone else.

I could call purpose out in other people.

I could help others shine.

But deep down, I struggled to believe I was fully loved without performance.

And that led to years of depression.

Years of trying to carry everything myself.
Years of giving Jesus the wheel... only to slowly take it back again
and say, "Okay God, I got this from here."

Maybe some of you know what that cycle feels like.

You surrender.
Then fear creeps back in.
Control creeps back in.
Pride creeps back in.

Because pride doesn't always look loud or arrogant. Sometimes pride
looks like believing everything depends on you.

But 1 Peter 5:7 says, "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares
for you."

I wasn't doing that. I was carrying everything myself.

But God is such a patient Father.

Even when we wander...
Even when we resist Him...
Even when we keep picking up burdens He asked us to lay down...

He stays.

Psalm 46:1 says, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present
help in trouble."

And in 2023, everything changed.

My Mom — my rock, my safe place — was suddenly diagnosed with
stage 4 cancer. The doctors gave her two to four months to live.

We were completely shocked.

Apparently she had been quietly carrying this secret, protecting all of us from the weight of it.

And before we could even process what was happening, she declined rapidly.

One month later... she was gone.

I can't fully describe that kind of shock.

The grief.

The confusion.

The anger.

Psalm 34:18 says, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted."

But at the time, I didn't feel close to anything. I walked around numb for months, trying to understand how someone could be there one moment... and gone the next.

Nothing made sense.

And then one night, in my darkest hour, I completely broke.

I cried out to Jesus from a place deeper than words.

Romans 8:26 says the Spirit intercedes for us "with groanings too deep for words."

That was me.

And suddenly... He was there.

Not physically.

But His presence filled the room so strongly that everything changed.

The fear stopped.

The noise stopped.

Everything became peaceful in His presence.

And He called me His daughter.

Not servant.
Not performer.
Not failure.

Daughter.

1 John 3:1 says, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God."

Then He began showing me something.

He showed me that my Mom loved us so deeply that she chose to carry her suffering quietly because she didn't want us burdened by it. And as painful as that was, it came from love.

Then He connected another piece for me.

He showed me my own children.

And I felt the depth of what I would do for them.
How I would protect them.
Carry pain for them.
Fight for them.
Love them without condition.

And then suddenly I understood something deeper:

If my love as a mother is this deep...
How much greater is the love of our Heavenly Father?

Matthew 7:11 says, "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?"

Then something happened I will never forget.

Jesus touched my forehead.

And for one single moment... His entire life flashed before me.

From birth to death.

And I felt it.

Not just saw it.

Felt it.

I felt how deep His love is for us.

How wide.

How sacrificial.

How relentless.

Ephesians 3:18–19 says His love is so wide, long, high, and deep that it surpasses knowledge.

I felt the weight of what He carried for humanity.

And in one touch, everything changed.

The grief that had consumed me was suddenly gone.

And in its place was the love of Jesus.

His love was greater than my pain.

And in that moment I realized something:

I lost my mother...

But I regained THE Father.

Not a distant God.

Not religion.

Not performance.

A Father.
Abba.

Romans 8:15 says, "You received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"

For the first time in my life, I truly laid everything at His feet.

The striving.
The pride.
The fear.
The grief.
The control.

All of it.

And what I've learned is this:

The Father's love is not something we earn.
It's something we surrender into.

Some of us are exhausted because we are trying to carry things we were never meant to carry.

But Abba is saying:
"Come to Me."

Just like Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Not when you're perfect.
Not when you have it all together.

I think there are people here today who are carrying hidden grief...
hidden fear... hidden exhaustion.

And maybe you've believed lies for so long that they feel true now.

"No one sees me."

“No one cares.”

“I have to hold this all together.”

But those are not the words of your Father.

Your Father calls you loved.

Chosen.

Seen.

Wanted.

His.

Isaiah 43:1 says, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are Mine.”

And sometimes healing begins the moment His voice becomes louder than the lie.

That night changed my life forever.

Because I realized Jesus was never far away.

He was still there...waiting for me the same way He did when I was a little girl talking to Him as my friend. He was just waiting for his daughter to return.

Jacque Stukowski

