

Hey, guys! I'm excited to share my story with y'all, the heart behind this project, and I hope one day I get the opportunity to do it in person. When you meet me, the first thing you probably notice is that I have some sort of accent that doesn't really match up with anyone you've ever met before. When you get to know me, you probably will learn that I'm more than willing to talk about why my voice is the way that it is, because it's crazy-unique and is a great testimony to God's anointing and calling on my life.

I have an identical twin sister; we developed Cytophasia very early on in our development. If you don't know what that is, it's a twin-language that sounds like jibberish in which the twins only communicate and understand one another. It occurs in 50% of twins, identical or fraternal, but normally fades away during the key linguistic developmental years, around 2-5 years of age. Of course, Meesh and I decided to be different, and we were in the rare group of twins (2%) that wanted nothing more to keep our secret language.

I didn't learn to speak English until I was five, making it my second language. I went through years of extensive speech therapy to learn what was supposed to be my native language, and my accent today is a result of how I first learned to speak.

Growing up, as I'm sure you can imagine, life was #rough. Meesh and I were different – not better or worse than anyone else, just different. That made me a target. Without going into too much detail, let's just say that words have power. You know that. The words of others deeply affected who I was growing up, who I came to see myself as, and what I thought I was worth. I never believed that I was good enough. And unfortunately, a lot of experiences, even today, as a grown woman, continually reiterate that belief. There are times when I still dread meeting new people, because I know what the first question they'll ask me is going to be. There are still times when I want to hide what it is that makes me different. BUT, the good news is, Jesus met me in that place when I was 18 years old, and He gave my story meaning, purpose, and value.

I've learned what it means to own my story. A large part of my career involves me speaking to large groups on a regular basis. If you would have told me I'd do that when I was in high school, I would have vomited on you. The idea of speaking up in a group of more than 5 people used to terrify me. I used to pray that I wouldn't be called on to answer a question in class. Now, speaking allows me to share my story, letting people know that they are indeed valued, seen, and loved. The Lord has written a beautiful narrative in my heart, showing me that who He created me to be is perfect.

My story makes me who I am. I can say with great certainty and absolute honesty that I did not fully know who I was before I met Jesus, but I often fall back to the place I was before knowing my true worth... desperately searching for affection & digging wells that I hope will fill me up, but never seem to do the trick. It's in those moments that I'm reminded why God has sown in my heart the topic of identity and a calling to youth ministry.

Every teenager needs to hear that they are worthy, that they are loved, and that they are more than enough, yet never too much. Every teenager deserves to know that they were made for more than the world tells them.

