

The “I” in Me

Angela Glass



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LITERACY NARRATIVE**

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Curiosity, yes, curious I was. That was me. I knew early on that my voice was dormant (having normal physical functions suspended or slowed down for a period; in or as if in a deep sleep,) yet I was around situations that caused my laughter to celebrate like joy and my smile to pierce through any sword of defeat. I was also holding moments of fear. I saw silence take my breath and force me to navigate adult words I never knew. Adult words like anxiety, hopelessness, scared, distorted, dark. What these words wanted as they hovered over me, I didn't know, but I was sure that my world was not normal. I always knew something better was inside of me and I was curious to find that out while living in a world that began to shape my every thought and idea.

That single concept of “there’s better on the inside of me,” I believe, saved me. Somehow that thought wrapped around me inconspicuously. I like to think that children just by nature want to have joy and to see that in their small worlds. Growing up, I saw no clear guidelines that my life had great value. I loved my grandmother and, for the most part, my life as I lived it. I think I accepted things like poverty, abuse, and neglect because they accepted me. I didn’t fight about who was right or wrong but I know now that an internal guide was at work, wanting me to believe better. That definitely helped me at times throughout those moments of life, as I began to learn and recognize that not everything would always go well for me. As a child I could look back and feel the force of acting like a child but also realizing I was far from having connections with anything nurturing, caring or a sense of belonging. I wanted to feel those emotions and receive a child’s reward. I would wonder why I never saw my mom like I felt I should have. I would babysit her absence with the love that I wanted to see. When she would not come home like she said she would, I apologized for her and groomed myself to tolerate absence. And what word...what word was hovering over me that labeled me, when it came to not knowing my father or having a true relationship with him. I realized by not having a blueprint of “right,” it allowed me to form so many hidden places that shaped me and really took the driver’s seat of my heart, as that pain masked my hurt and a longing for love. I stayed confused, alone with my thoughts, and silent. On one hand I was taught to join in on the social norms of my world, but I was also being told by my surroundings that some things are impossible to mask. My curiosity, again, was begging for answers that my mind couldn’t quite give.

I remember growing up and having conversations with people who had very vivid memories of their childhood that amazed me with how they could recollect certain things at a very young age. My memories were hit and miss, but I realized as an adult how my environment spoke to me without using a single word. Do you think it’s hard for a child to comprehend the knowledge that they are living inside someone else’s world and vision? Do you think a child knows what they are comprehending at times when it’s some of the hardest situations imaginable? What happens when we as children sit in the chair of life—feet barely touching the ground, hands clinging to the cold metal of the resting arms as we are told to accept everything we see? My world was forming with or without my permission.

Getting older, I managed to trek my way through many family dysfunctions and patterns, patterns that I would have to reconcile with as a now grown-up little girl. I found myself with a joy for life and a love for writing, drawing, and creating anything I could touch. I was always wanting to see more from life. I would sit in spaces that allowed me to serve, help, assist, and nurture things that needed to grow. I knew I had a keen eye to look past the mess of a situation and see miracles, to encourage others to pull peace from pain, and motivate the obvious jewel to shine even when it was encompassed by the debris of life.

I became a mother early and unplanned I had to quickly scoot down in my “chair of life,” to somehow put my feet on the ground and start facing real realities that I was not ready for. I was that girl: marriage, family, home, let’s make it a great life! I had made up in my mind that even though challenges happened to me, I was going to use that to help me obtain what I really wanted. My intentions were great, but I also realized very quickly that being a parent in real time versus my vision in my mind... well, they often bumped heads. The word “mother” means a lot to me. It can be rewarding and intriguing at the same time. Here I was giving myself a responsibility to watch another human being unfold their life under my care. I wanted us to be okay while simultaneously knowing that I had a lot of junk to clean up along the way. She needed me and I was waiting on my past to help guide my decisions. I knew what I wanted to see in our lives and I started to slowly invite those thoughts in. I found that being curious was benefiting me. I believe becoming a parent challenged me to have options that I didn’t know I could have, as far as raising her. I wanted to choose to grow into the person that kept nudging me from within. I wanted to choose to be more curious about believing for better, even when that wasn’t always my reality. I ended up waiting twelve more years before I had my last child. Funny thing is, I actually wanted to wait longer. I know, I know. Both of my girls definitely had plenty of questions for me and as I put everything on the table for them to know, I am glad it turned out the way it did.



One epic moment that shifted my life was an impromptu blessing. I got to travel abroad to Malawi, Africa. The trip came in true fashion, unexpected! My youngest daughter was nine at the time and we felt so thankful to travel with a team from our church. By this time, I had finished my first book *Words Matter* and was in the process of trying to get it published. I was on cloud nine that I actually wrote my first book. Eeekkk!

Of course, I was also dealing with family/personal drama, a few medical issues, and job decisions. Within a span of three years, I had a hysterectomy due to fibroids and previous menstrual issues, a bone marrow biopsy; I became allergic to dairy, anemia; my job wanted me to relocate back to our corporate office. I had coined early on in my life that my middle name was “transition and change,” because I always felt like my whole life was a constant pattern of ebb and flow (used to describe something that changes in a regular and repeated way.)

I was taught to walk by faith. I was taught to trust God. I was taught to tug harder for what I wanted...with a smile. I loved the strong desires in me to believe in better even when I saw the opposite. Faith seemed to keep my boat rowing, and glimpses of mental success felt rewarding. I mentioned having an

epic moment but, if I am honest, epic moments seemed to be waiting on me around every corner. With so many things that were happening all at once I started to see a pattern of me staying in survival mode while outwardly trying my best to walk by faith and trust that everything was going to work out. I just knew others were going to be as excited as I was about my book, right? I mean, this is a great accomplishment. After connecting to a women’s organization that I was faithful in for several years, I asked them to help support me financially in my endeavors. Though they were excited for me, they were not able to assist. I was devastated but I was okay as I found peace and confidence in closing out my savings account to pay for the publishing help. I was a firm believer in trusting the process. Speed up to almost two years later, I was still waiting for my book that I was sure to have been completed by now, only to have my

publisher that I trusted unexpectedly drop me. Complete silence!

Okay, does your facial reaction look like mine did?

I reminded myself to keep going through the challenge and stay true to what I saw that was sitting on those blank pages when I first began the process. I had written a book. My first book! Writing my book was such an accomplishment for me, and I was having a great time being joyful and excited even if I didn't have all the answers on how it was going to come together. My faith was definitely guarding every opposition that came to bring doubt. You see, this book brought up so much of my past that was still relevant in my life. Even though I was older at this point, so much of my existence was still sitting in that "chair of life," and many times I didn't know what exactly to look at. This book was literally pieces of my journey comprised on humble pages, but I also was coming into knowledge about the hard realities of what I wish I had verses what I was given. I battled with how someone like me, who is so passionate and encouraging about life, have all these negative pieces. My faith told me that all these things were working out for me and I just needed to have a positive perspective on the pain. But what I also began to understand was that faith was asking me to do something. I just didn't want to give this over to God and trust, I wanted to participate in the process. I wanted to roll up my sleeves while also sit still for answers. I wanted to use the very things that I appreciate about me to help guard my visions and dreams that I saw for myself. I loved that I didn't have all the answers, but I could trust that was enough to get me started and keep me motivated. Faith at work. So I got to work, fumbling, laughing, crying, healing bit by bit. So many things didn't make sense to me but I knew it was necessary. I was still struggling because my outside world spoke a different language than my inner world. I was taught to smile through it all and just trust, my inner world was saying this wound from your youth formed this idea that has become truth to you and it can't stay. I was slowly seeing how I had built up so many truths based off of false narratives. I had to start asking myself questions about my childhood, my marriages, dysfunctional patterns, and all things in between. It was scary and freeing at the same time. Nothing happened overnight but I truly learned in those moments that it's the small things that truly make a difference.

Back to my trip—we went to Malawi, Africa and my life was changed. Something happened to me over there.

Oh, my daughter got sick for 5 days, lost nearly 5 pounds, we didn't have any travel money to take with us, (she had \$20 and so did I,) and our luggage didn't meet us upon our arrival back home. Whew! Yeah, just your normal everyday things that happen, right?

But I have to say something deeper was taking place. My world started to become hungry for something that my eyes couldn't satisfy. I came back home and had to pick back up with life, with my family, my book, and my new world that still looked the same. I was seeing everything much differently and feeling it. Things started to take on a whole new meaning, and something inside of me was sounding off. I could hear it—like a faraway rumble of thunder building its way to the doorstep of my heart.

My definition of purpose is this: it's everyday living; it's walking out your journey in simple, powerful, steps that open up powerful pieces of your life as you partner with this knowing **YOUR LIFE MATTERS**. When you start there... you will get answers!

I began to slow down when I came back from Africa. I slowed down mentally and physically. Now let me tell you, we were a family on the go, and I didn't realize how much it affected us in such a major way up until this point. I mean, it was good and the things we were connected to were amazing: volunteering, serving,

community engagement, collaborating with like minds to organize relevant causes for change, and lots of family things—oh, and sports. We did it all and loved it! But I realized a greater piece of me was pulling on something that I had left behind...my healing. That little girl was still sitting in that chair, feet barely touching the ground, and was begging for attention. One of the hardest things about walking out your life and this journey is that you find out, in a lot of cases, you will have to do the work alone. Here I was as a young child with family, community, people, environments, society, and passed down teachings that molded me, to now having to wake in my grown self and answer for my own life, still with many questions and too few answers. How do I do that with life still happening every day and the understanding that I have to continue to be a part of it, yet knowing the only way for me to find answers meant fading out of that race. Everywhere I looked people seemed to be doing what I was doing. How could I find out what was calling me from within? The little girl in me needed attention and so did my pain as I finally started to see a very different vision than what I was given growing up. The best answer for me was just taking my time and being patient with me. I didn't realize so much pain was there while simultaneously having joy with each "vacation" I took from looking to the world for advice.

I began to put in time to focus on me and desired to learn how to love myself...all of me. It felt good and challenging at the same time. It was so funny, everything started to want to come to my aid once I made this decision to slow down. The trees, nature, my home, motherhood, my passions, all started to talk to me in a way I had never heard before. It was a total wonder! How could I have missed this? I look back and can see bits and pieces of this soft voice wanting to be recognized. I remember one day I was sitting quiet, and I began to cry. You know, that pretty ugly cry? It was pretty ugly! Then out of nowhere, I started to laugh...I laughed so hard. As I sat there letting the tears hit my carpet in crisscross-applesauce, I began to ask myself, "Is this what happiness feels like?" Everything was so brand new, and I loved it! Slowing down began empowering me to run with a better understanding of my life.

I started cleaning out this mindset and partnered with loving myself one step at a time. Soon, the writing came more easily, and the confidence started to shine even when it rained. And it still rains! It has been some hard work on my end, and I have had days where I was just barely making it. Still, I allowed the process to keep building a bridge for me that no one could tear down. I soaked up everything I could when it came to bettering myself. Even at a young age I kept a journal. I can smile now as I look back and see all the things that I thought were weird and unusual as it was actually a piece of my process to build my self-confidence. My journals allowed me to express myself, my creativity opened up my mind to believe, and my faith was building bridges for everything to eventually come together so I could learn to walk in confidence into what I see for myself today. I kept reminding myself to stay teachable and to write, even when it was hard to express my thoughts on paper. I found myself years later with some of my journals, looking through them, amazed at my courage. Yep, ugly tears!

That courage was something that I struggled with when it came to trying to be myself—my true self that I knew was waiting to be introduced. I can see some of my old mindsets that I no longer carry and ways that do not serve me anymore as a thing of the past. My life has become more enriched, and my awareness of my internal strength has anchored me as a mother, a writer, a server, an advocate, and a cheerleader.

Being empowered to go back to my younger self and heal helped me to understand more about the greater voice I had inside of me. I likened it to someone gifting you a

new car and you know nothing about it or how it runs versus you picking out the car you want and being able to drive it, look under the hood, get some advice on all its bells and whistles. I saw the power of creating my own story and changing the pages of my life regardless of how someone wrote it: very priceless for me. That sentiment has given me freedom because I now know that it is purpose in the process. I know that every vision I have has to have a process. Being the author of several books didn't happen overnight. The vision I saw of holding a book in my hand started off as thought, and I gladly report it took a lot of pieces to make everything come together and bring my vision into fruition. The joy I have of celebrating my books with others, signing copies, getting encouraging feedback and testimonies of change go hand in hand with the process of the journey to get there. I don't ever want to be afraid of talking about the hard places that make us or the small pieces that make great change. I found that celebrating myself did more than give me courage to carry on, it helped revive places within me that knew I was fit for the journey. When I cheered for me in my hardest moments it made way for me to accept so many things that I was pushing away. I was giving permission a chance to assist me in this process. I was learning that I needed to understand that my process was not just a word but a journey that has to happen and over time I get the gift of seeing what desires to manifest from that. I encourage cultivation and nurturing. They go hand in hand with this journey and so much of why I still love what I do is a result from those two amazing words. We are a growing being and that will always be a part of our purpose. As we desire to improve our mindset and set our heart to develop that constant roadmap for change, you will by default nurture the good and the challenging parts of who you are. I am learning to be okay with that. I have chosen to embrace the process. One step at a time.



Angela Glass

Angela Glass is a poet, award-winning writer, and author of women's book *Words Matter*. A motivational speaker and advocate for youth literacy, Angela has written books that focus on embracing your purpose along with sparking critical thinking in youth to celebrate creativity while having confidence as they explore the many styles of writing. When Angela is not nestled in her corner desk at home, she enjoys letting nature give her new writing ideas while she soaks up the southern sun in Arkansas.