

## Who Do You Think You Are?

“**N**ot enough.”  
 “Lazy.”  
 “Stupid.”  
 “Won’t amount to anything.”

Direct quotes. Real words. Spoken over my life by real people who looked me in my face and decided they knew exactly who I was and exactly who I would never be.

And the wild part?

I believed them.

I believed them so completely, so deeply, that they stopped being things people said about me and started being things I said about myself. They moved from their mouths into my mind and set up a permanent residence there, playing on repeat at every moment I dared to try, every moment I considered stepping forward, every moment life offered me a chance to show up as something more.

And I want to prove it to you. Not tell you. prove it.

Because I need you to feel this, not just read it.

There was an ordinary Tuesday morning in college history class. Nothing special about the day. No dramatic circumstances. No major crisis unfolding. Just a professor at the front of the room, a question hanging in the air, and thirty or so students sitting in rows waiting to see who would answer it.

BECAUSE YOU CAN

I knew the answer.

I want you to hold that before we go any further. I knew exactly what he was asking. I had read the chapter. I had taken the notes. The answer was sitting right there in my mind, fully formed, clear as day, ready to go.

But my hand never moved.

I sank into that chair like I was trying to disappear into the plastic. I broke eye contact with the professor. I dropped my head toward my notebook and stared at those words like they held the secrets of the universe, doing everything a person does when they are desperately, silently begging. please. Don't call on me.

And here is what gets me when I look back on it now.

Nobody in that room was threatening me. Nobody wanted to hurt me. It was a history question on a Tuesday morning, and the absolute worst thing that could have happened if I got it wrong was a moment of awkwardness that would have been forgotten by lunch.

But my body did not know that.

My heart was pounding like I was running for my life. My palms were soaked. My mind, the very same mind that knew the answer, had turned itself into a courtroom, and I was the one on trial, and the jury was every single person sitting in that room.

What if I get it wrong?

What if they laugh?

What if that confirms everything they already think about me?

What if it confirms everything I already think about me?

So I stayed silent. I stayed small. I stayed safe.

And nobody in that room had any idea any of it was happening.

That is the thing about the battle for identity. Most of it is completely invisible. It plays out in the six inches between your ears, in the half second between an opportunity and your response to it, in the quiet moments when nobody is watching and you choose to shrink instead of rise.

I had been shrinking for a long time before that history class.

And the reason goes deeper than nerves. Deeper than shyness. Deeper than introversion.

## WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

The reason had a voice. And that voice had been speaking over my life for years, repeating the same things on a loop until I stopped questioning whether they were true and just accepted them as fact.

“Not enough.”

“Lazy.”

“Stupid.”

“Won’t amount to anything.”

Those words had become the temperature of my life. And I didn’t even know I could change it.

And I’m not going to focus on who said them, because that’s not what’s most important right now. What matters is what was said, because if you’re honest, you’ve had somebody say versions of that to you too.

They judged you off one mistake.

One moment.

One post.

One rumor.

One season.

Maybe you made a mistake publicly. Maybe it led to top tier embarrassment. Maybe it broke your heart because shame doesn’t just hurt. It tries to rewrite your identity.

People will screenshot you, laugh at you, belittle you, scandalize your name, DM other people about you, whisper behind closed doors, and it is painful.

But hear me: as hurtful as it is, it is not definitive. It doesn’t deserve the fullness of your attention, because your attention is too valuable.

And you are not powerless in this process.

I need you to catch this: everything you will build stands on one foundation. mindset and identity.

We’re living in an identity crisis. But before we break that down, we have to define identity. Identity, at its core, is who you believe you are. It’s the series of choices you repeatedly make. The habits you live by. The mindset you carry. The worldview you possess. The way you show up on purpose on this earth.

And identity is powerful because it operates like a thermostat, not a

thermometer. A thermometer only reflects the temperature in a room. But a thermostat sets it, deciding how warm or cold life is allowed to become.

Most people unknowingly inherit a low temperature setting shaped by trauma, labels, and expectations placed on them early in life. And no matter how much external success enters the room, the internal system recalibrates back to what feels familiar. Psychologists actually have a name for this phenomenon. It's called the "set point theory" of wellbeing, the idea that people tend to return to a baseline level of happiness or self-perception regardless of what happens around them, because the internal temperature was never actually reset.

That's why sustainable growth isn't just about pushing harder. It's about resetting the internal temperature of belief. Because until identity changes at its core, behavior snaps back. And if you're reading this right now, you might be realizing why you keep cycling. Because you've had wins. You've stacked wins. You've broken some cycles.

But there are other patterns you cannot shake, no matter how hard you try to shimmy them off. And the reason is simple: that internal thermostat wasn't set by you. It was set by parents. Grandparents. Guardians. Foster parents. Teachers. Authority figures. Opinions. Environments.

So you accepted beliefs about yourself that were never yours.

"If they keep saying I'm lazy, maybe I am."

"If they keep saying I'm incapable, maybe I am."

"If they keep mocking me, maybe I deserve it."

"Maybe I'm not enough."

"Maybe I'll never be enough."

And if you're willing to be honest, maybe you've felt that too. If you have felt or are currently feeling this way, it's okay. The good news is, your temperature setting isn't permanent, and it can be reset by answering one simple yet foundational question.

Who do you think you are?

No. Pause. Not who you want to be. Not who people expect you to be. Not who your pain has tried to convince you that you are.

I asked you a very specific question: Who do you think you are?

## WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

And if I'm honest, it's one of the most important questions you will ever answer, because the way you answer it will shape the way you live, the way you love, the way you lead, the way you heal, and the way you show up on this planet.

So I want you to answer it right now. Period.

Think deeply. Don't rush past it. Don't give me the church answer. Don't give me the social media answer. I want the real one. the one you say in your head when nobody's around. The one you feel in your chest when life gets heavy.

My goal is that by the time we finish this book together, your answer to that question will be different. Not that you'll be a different person, but that your perception of who you are will be different in the absolute greatest way.

Because when perception changes, possibility changes.

And I'm not here to help you "think" who you are, or "guess" who you are, or "hope" for who you want to be. I'm here to give you tools, keys, and resources to help you know, and to step wholly, fully, and freely into who you were always meant to be.

But in order to do that, we have to go on a journey.

So I invite you to take this journey with me. We're going to explore some things that I know, I know, have the power to revolutionize your entire life.

So again I ask: Who are you?

And as you think about the answer, don't focus so much on who you want to be. Don't focus on who people want you to be. Because many of us spend our entire lives trying to become a version of ourselves that makes other people comfortable.

That's not the question.

I didn't ask you what others think you are.

I asked you: Who do you think you are?

Because the truth is, you are the only person on planet earth who fully knows your thought patterns. Your mind. Your internal dialogue. Your memories. Your hopes. Your fears. Your processing. You are the only one who hears the conversations you have with yourself at 2:00 a.m.

So you must accept this: it is not about what others think you are. What's

most important is establishing who YOU think you are.

And I hope you will take this book seriously enough to answer honestly, because honesty is the only doorway to transformation.

If you approach this book with a level of delusion that only exists to coddle you, you might as well stop right now. I'm not here to just make you feel good. I'm here to help you get free.

Because what I desire for you is real transformation.

I'm not here just to give you information.

Information is everywhere. Information is free. You can Google information. You don't even have to Google anymore. You can ask AI and pull facts from anywhere in seconds.

But hear me: information alone has never changed a life.

People don't change because they know more. People change when they see themselves differently, and then they move accordingly.

So yes, you'll get education. You'll get motivation. You'll get affirmation.

But what matters most to me is transformation. Inside out. So you can live your absolute best life.

If this book found its way to your hands, I don't believe it's by accident. These words are for your healing.

Don't resist.

This is for you.

And let's be real: labels can break us. Trauma can break us. Environments can quietly put a lid on our life, so instead of growing, thriving, shining, and flourishing, we shrink.

We shrink in rooms we were meant to rise in.

We shrink because it feels familiar.

I know this because I lived it.

As I told you earlier, I remember being in college, afraid to answer questions in class. It wasn't just that one time. It was a regular occurrence, and it even carried over into my professional career as well. I was never afraid because I didn't know the answers, but because I was terrified of being judged by my peers and colleagues. Something so simple caused me incredible stress. And when you really think about it, what would it have cost me to really put

## WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

myself out there & be wrong? Not my life. Not my livelihood. Not my health. Nothing.

Yet I still shrank.

I hid. I cowered. I played small.

I can't tell you how many times there was an opportunity. volunteer, speak, share, answer, sing, participate. And everything in my heart and soul screamed, raise your hand to volunteer as tribute, get in the game, show up for yourself.

I would have full pep talks in my head.

But my body stayed paralyzed.

That's what trauma does. And I know we all have different trauma. My trauma isn't your trauma. But here's something we can say without flinching: trauma is more common than people want to admit.

According to the CDC, 63.9% of U.S. adults have experienced at least one Adverse Childhood Experience, and 17.3% report four or more. Read that again. Nearly two out of every three adults are walking around with something they had to survive before they even finished growing up.

And when stress becomes chronic, it doesn't just live in the mind. Research shows it reshapes the nervous system, weakens the immune system, and alters the way the brain processes threat and safety. So your body literally learns to brace for impact, even when the danger is long gone.

So no, you're not "crazy."

You're conditioned.

And trauma can become a lid. A lid on a jar. And you know exactly what I mean. That jar in the kitchen. pickles, olives, peppers. where the manufacturer tightened the lid so hard you squeeze until your hands turn white and the jar still won't open.

That's what trauma can feel like.

That's what labels can feel like.

A lid on your life, capping you from springboarding into who you were meant to be.

But I'm here to tell you, if that lid has been on too long and you're ready for a change, you are in the right place.

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Because it's time.

It's time for you to change your life.

And hear me carefully: nothing changes unless you change.

So the real shift must happen in you. I want you to physically imagine yourself grabbing that thermostat. And we are getting ready to turn it up a whole other notch.

Because those labels they put on you, just like the labels put on me, are not the truth. They are perceptions.

And what people think of me is not my business. They are not my Creator. They are not my God. They did not give me my purpose, and they cannot take it away.

A lot of people are just managing their own pain.

And yes, hurt people hurt people. But we are no longer accepting pain as identity.

I'm telling you with every fiber in my body: if you change your belief, you can change your life. You become what you repeatedly believe, because belief directs behavior and behavior builds outcomes.

That said, let me take you into my story.

In 2018, I made a decision.

"I'm going to become a professional speaker, a thought leader."

That was it. Author wasn't part of the original plan. Podcast host wasn't part of the original plan. Those were blessings added along the way. But I set out to use my story, my pain, my trauma, to create next-level impact in the hearts and souls of people.

Purpose work. Worth-it work.

And I'm not going to lie: it wasn't easy. But it has been the most worthwhile work I have ever done because it has been the most purposeful work I have ever done.

And I remember saying this out loud:

"I'm going to be one of the greatest communicators on planet earth."

And at first, I didn't believe it.

Because I struggled in English and literature in high school, not because I couldn't comprehend, but because trauma and turmoil outside the classroom

## WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

made my mind cloudy. And labels got in my head.

“They think I’m lazy, so I might as well be lazy.”

“They think I’m not smart, so why try?”

“I’ll make them right.”

And if you’ve started wearing labels like badges, like they’re your identity, hear me: it’s time to rip the labels off.

It’s time.

This reminds me of a trip I took years ago to California, to the Sequoia National Forest, to see the giant redwoods.

If you’ve never seen them, you have to. At least once in your life.

I stood there completely blown away. Those trees were living monuments, stretching into the sky like skyscrapers built by God Himself. To put it in perspective, some of the largest giant sequoias stand over 270 feet tall, as high as a 26-story building, and they can live to be over 3,000 years old. They are the most massive living organisms on the planet by volume. And the most jaw-dropping fact of all? Each one of those giants started out as a seed the size of a rolled-up oat flake. Something small enough to fit in the palm of your hand.

One thought hit me like revelation as I stood there:

Even the giants were once seeds.

And everything that tree needed to become a giant was already inside it, in seed form. The DNA was already set. It only had to grow.

And that’s when I realized:

I didn’t have to become great. I was born with greatness in seed form.

I didn’t have to become valid. I was born valid.

I didn’t need anyone else’s stamp of approval. I was born with identity when God breathed life into my lungs.

The only thing missing was belief.

And I have to pause right here and give my mother her flowers, Mrs. Pamela Victoria Black, because she planted seeds of belief in me for years. And I didn’t always take it seriously. I used to think, “Of course you say that. You’re my mom.” But she didn’t have to think anything. She chose to believe the best in her child.

BECAUSE YOU CAN

And those seeds eventually took root.

So, back to 2018. I made the decision.

“I’m no longer living out labels.”

Lazy? Off.

Stupid? Off.

Not enough? Off.

One by one, I took them off my body, not as badges of honor, but as trash. And I threw them away.

Then I created new labels through believing, encouraging, and affirming myself. Because sometimes you have to speak life over yourself until your mind catches up.

But it still wasn’t easy.

I would ask myself:

“Bro, who do you think you are?”

Do you realize you failed public speaking in college? Do you realize you were afraid to speak in front of ten people, let alone ten thousand? Do you realize your voice trembles when you speak?

And I had a choice: silence the noise, or submit to it.

I decided to silence it.

Yes, I failed public speaking. Yes, I was afraid. Yes, my voice trembled.

But the answer to “Who do you think you are?” became this:

I am who I choose to be.

Belief is the foundation of everything else that comes next.

And there has to come a D-Day in everybody’s life. Decision Day.

Because indecision is also a decision.

Some of you have already decided to play small. Some of you decided to believe the worst about yourself.

But I’m here to tell you: you are not powerless. You are not helpless.

It is time to stop identifying as the victim.

And let me say it with compassion and truth: maybe you were victimized. Maybe you are a victim in the story. But you do not have to wear “victim” as identity.

Say it with me:

## WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

I am not a victim.

Even if someone victimized you, your identity is not a victim. You are a warrior. An overcomer. A conqueror. A world changer. Everything they told you you could never be.

You were born great.

And the only person who has to believe it is you.

And here's how identity works:

You don't become confident by doing more. You do more when you remember who you are.

Confidence isn't something you earn only through repetition. It's something you remember through alignment. When you forget who you are, every action feels heavy, forced, uncertain. But when you remember your essence, effort becomes lighter and direction becomes clearer.

You stop chasing validation. You start walking in truth.

The soul doesn't ask you to prove yourself. It asks you to return to yourself.

And transformation begins the moment identity replaces insecurity as your operating system.

So here's my question before you move forward:

Will you keep living from what happened to you? Will you keep living from what they said? Will you keep living from what you did wrong?

Or will you live from who you were created to be?

Because you must rewrite identity from experience-based to purpose-based.

That's the work. That's the shift. That's the thermostat turning.

And even when people laughed at me, even when people said, "We can't wait until he fails," I didn't let their opinions become anchors.

I decided the only person who could stop me was me.

And I wasn't going to stop.

And even though I didn't believe boldly at first, I believed just enough. Because the last time I checked, the Bible says it only takes faith the size of a mustard seed to move mountains. And I had mustard-seed faith that maybe, just maybe, I could change my whole life.

Then action followed belief.

## BECAUSE YOU CAN

The more I believed, the more I acted.

The more I acted, the more I believed.

Until that belief became bold. Big. Unstoppable.

And that belief set the stage for relationships, training, and opportunities I could have never orchestrated on my own. Training with Trent Shelton and Les Brown. Sharing stages with world-renowned voices.

Not by accident. By intention. By belief. By moving the thermostat.

So here's my challenge to you:

Take your fingers, your proverbial fingers, and turn your thermostat up. From this moment forward. From the moment you read this book until the rest of your days on earth, decide:

I will no longer live the way I was living.

I will no longer see myself the way they see me.

I will no longer tear myself down.

I will no longer play small.

This is Decision Day.

And from this moment forward, I'm making the shift.

So again:

Who do you think you are?

Here's a starting answer you can borrow until you believe it fully:

I am great.

I am purpose.

I am an overcomer.

I am victorious.

I am walking out my God-anointed, God-appointed purpose.

Because I can.

Reflect & Apply: Who Do You Think You Are?

Journal Questions

1. What is the "temperature" your identity has been set to for most of your life? Where did that setting come from a person, an experience, a season? Write it out without editing yourself.

## WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

2. Think about the labels that were placed on you before you were old enough to reject them. Which ones have you been living as if they were true? Which ones are lies?
3. The chapter describes identity as a thermostat, not a thermometer. In what areas of your life are you still functioning like a thermometer simply reflecting the environment around you instead of setting the temperature?
4. What would the highest-temperature version of you look like? How does that person speak, carry themselves, make decisions, show up in relationships?
5. What has been your biggest excuse for not resetting your internal thermostat? Name it honestly. Now ask yourself: is that reason a fact, or is it a feeling dressed as a fact?

### D-Day Activity: Write Your New Identity Statement

On a blank page, write the heading: This is who I am.

Then write 10 statements about yourself that are true not because of what you have done, but because of who you were created to be. Not accomplishments identity. Not what you have achieved who you are at your core.

Example: I am a person of extraordinary resilience. I am capable of love that transforms. I am a leader whose presence changes rooms.

Read these statements out loud every morning for the next 7 days. Notice what shifts.