DAY 19

This Is Not My Path

The courage to change direction

Today's Diary at a Glance

In Day 19, Kimberly shares how fulfilling a promise to her late father led her to complete seminary at Virginia Union University, where she received unexpected honors. When invited into a Doctor of Ministry program, she accepted, but reflecting deeply on her spiritual history surfaced overwhelming trauma and painful memories. Recognizing that her mental health was shutting down, Kimberly prayed and chose to withdraw, realizing that perseverance does not mean enduring harm to prove capability. She felt released rather than defeated. Kimberly later redirected her gifts into an Ed.D. program in Organizational Leadership, focusing on psychological safety for neurodivergent employees and receiving her own autism diagnosis. Her journey affirmed that leaving an opportunity can provide the space needed to walk faithfully in one's own calling.

Key Life Lesson

Not every open opportunity or well-intentioned encouragement is an assignment you must accept. While some seasons demand perseverance, continuing on a path that threatens your well-being comes at a cost that wisdom cannot safely ignore. Choosing to change direction does not erase your accomplishments or mean you have failed, as the courage to begin again is just as significant as the courage to finish.

Spiritual Reflection

Proverbs 3:5–6 (KJV)

Trusting God is an ongoing process of discernment rather than an obligation to remain in every open door, even when circumstances begin to harm your health. Seeking divine guidance allows room to adjust course with wisdom, recognizing that walking away from a specific program is not a rejection of faith or calling.

Moment of Grace

May you extend deep grace to yourself for the seasons you spent pushing through exhaustion simply to meet the expectations of others or fulfill an old dream. You do not have to apologize for honoring your limits, nor must you stay on a painful road just to prove your strength.

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Today's Self-Reflection

1. Have you ever continued pursuing something because you believed other people expected you to finish it? Perhaps it was an educational program, a career, a ministry assignment, a relationship, or a dream that once seemed right for you.
2. What made you begin questioning whether it was still the right path?
3. Were you afraid of disappointing someone? Were you concerned that changing direction would make you appear unsuccessful? Or did you struggle to give yourself permission to pursue something different?
4. Consider whether there is an area of your life where you are confusing perseverance with obligation.
5. What would it look like to seek wisdom, recognize your needs, and make a decision that reflects both your values and your well-being?

My Journal

1. If you wish, write about an opportunity or path you once felt obligated to pursue, noting how staying or leaving affected your emotional and physical well-being.
2. If you wish, reflect on the legacy or values you want to carry forward, exploring how you might honor them in your own authentic way rather than walking in someone else's footsteps.

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Prayer & Application

Prayer prompt: If prayer is part of your practice, ask God for the clarity and courage to distinguish between an open door and the path that is genuinely meant for you. May you rest in the reassurance that you are released from proving your worth through unyielding endurance, and trust that divine guidance accompanies every new beginning.

Practical takeaway: Set aside time today to identify one commitment you are maintaining purely out of obligation or fear of disappointing others. Gently ask yourself whether continuing honors your well-being, giving yourself permission to explore what stepping away or releasing that burden might look like.

Reading Circle Discussion

1. Why is it often so difficult to step away from an opportunity that other people applaud or consider prestigious?
2. How can we tell the difference between healthy perseverance through a challenge and harmful endurance that compromises our mental and emotional safety?
3. Reflecting on Proverbs 3:5–6, how does acknowledging God in our paths include the freedom to let Him redirect us away from places that no longer serve our well-being?

Your written responses belong to you. You may leave any prompt unanswered and decide whether to share anything in a group.

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Read the complete chapter in your published book.

The Diary of a Neurodivergent Black Woman

30 Days of Faith, Identity, Healing, and Becoming · Kimberly J. Lewis, M.Div.

This companion includes manuscript-based summaries, the original questions in Today's Self-Reflection, and newly developed companion exercises. Scripture reference: Proverbs 3:5–6 (KJV). Source: Approved manuscript · Day 19 · pages 109–122.

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