

To your inner girl who is reading this: be strong and courageous
By: Génesis Isaac De León

Growing up in a household full of men made the word *woman* feel uncomfortable, as if I were an outsider. It took me years to call myself a woman, despite the obvious. As a woman in the military, both enlisted and as an officer, I was often criticized for my lower tone and higher pitch, especially when I chose empathy over dictatorship in conversations and conflict resolution. In seminary, it was sometimes difficult to get my point across. On one occasion, I was told not to use female authors because they were not considered “scholarly enough”, even though they met the required criteria for citation. As a woman chaplain, I am often mistaken for a nurse when I enter a room, and I find myself explaining my role as clergy and why being a man is not a requirement. And I could go on. Being a woman in these male-dominated spaces constantly reminds us that we are a minority, and that word can feel scarier as it represents more than gender.

As a Latina living in the diaspora, however, I began to see this not as a limitation but as an opportunity to bring something different to the table. Through our experiences, we are able to serve in multicultural contexts while remaining faithful to our roots. We can identify with others in their suffering and offer comfort, for His glory, from a place that feels like home. None of this would have been possible without community, and for that I am eternally grateful to Young *Líderes* AETH for providing the resources, mentorship, and platform that created space for our voices to be heard.

I worked hard to become the leader I wish I had. Yet along the valley, I still find myself doubting my capacity to move forward. That is the quiet tension within Proverbs 14:1, we can build but in the same way we can also tear down, sometimes with our own thoughts. In our own strength, we will only go so far. Through His Spirit, I am continually reminded that my identity is not found in what I do, but in Him. The best advice I was given before meeting my husband was "Mija, work on your relationship with God first, ground yourself in His word, and when you meet the man that God has for you, you will be ready". Ready for what exactly, I wonder? Now I know. Ready to surrender in prayer before reacting, ready to advise and support my partner with respect, ready to strengthen our family relationship so they can build healthy relationships with others. Real change begins with us and our intimacy with God; this will bear fruits in your household, our first ministry, helping the next generation of women thrive.

To your inner girl who is reading this: be strong and courageous, God is with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:9).



Génesis Isaac De León was born and raised in Puerto Rico. She is married to her wonderful husband, Orlando Morales Cintrón. Génesis currently serves as a Hospice Chaplain and US Army Reserve Chaplain. She holds a Master of Divinity (MDiv) and will soon earn a Master of Education (MEd).



**“La mujer
sabia edifica
su casa.”**
Proverbios 14:1