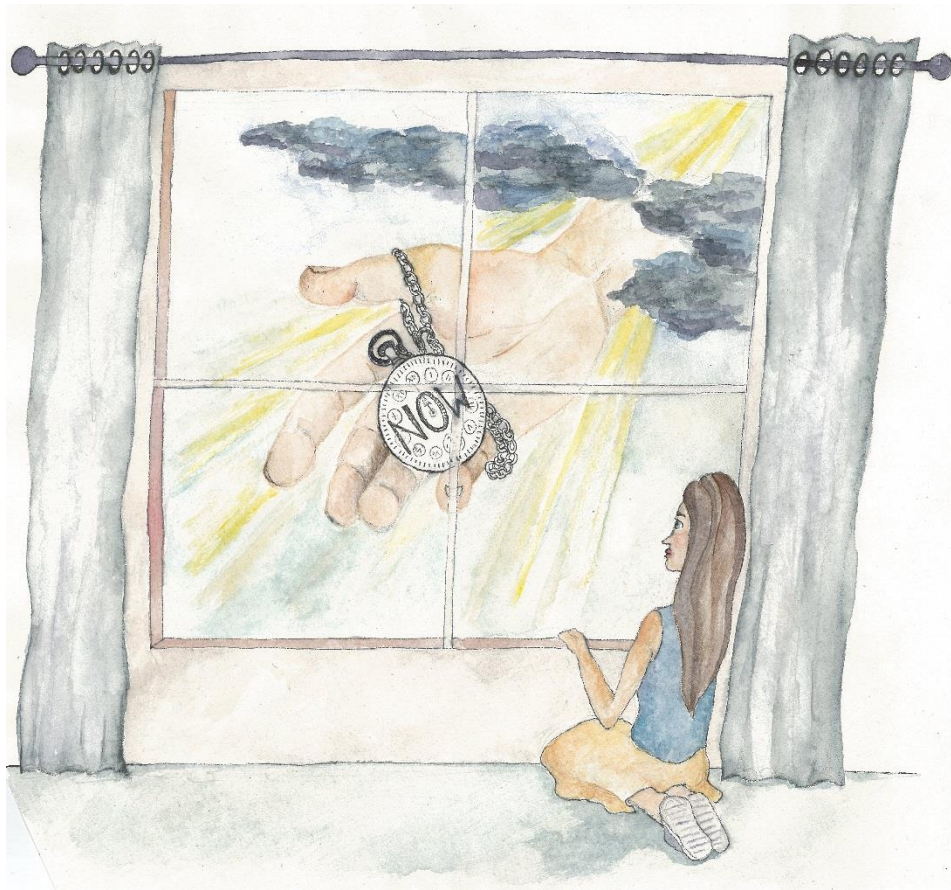


A Walk for Girls Through the Book of Esther



By

Maretha Retief

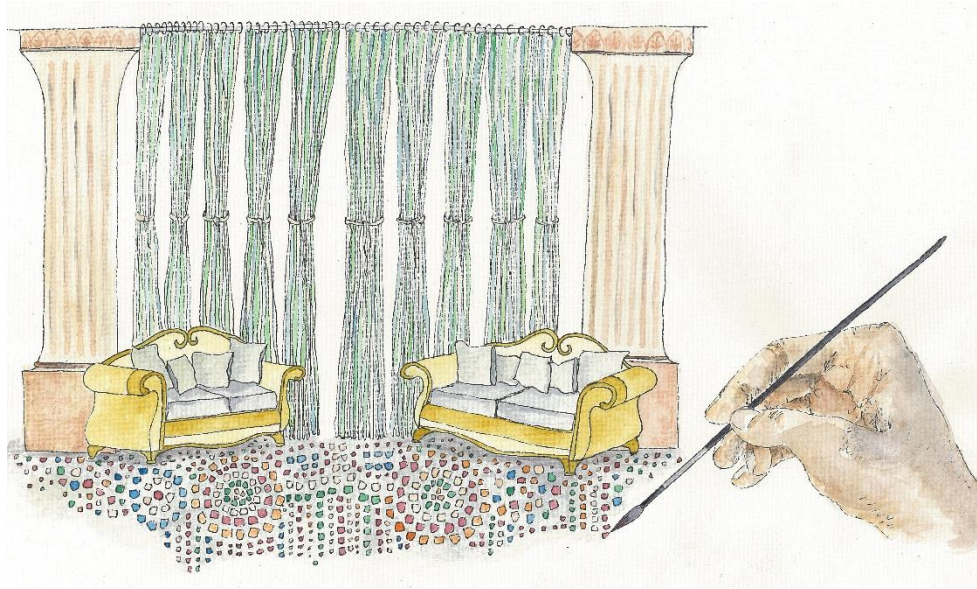
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Illustration by Jeanné de Villiers.

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Devotional 1: You are God's Artwork



Esther 1:6: There were hangings of fine white cloth, of green and of blue [cotton], fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings or rods and marble pillars. The couches of gold and silver rested on a [mosaic] pavement of porphyry, white marble, mother-of-pearl, and [precious] colored stones. (AMP)

Wow! Is this a pretty picture of the king's courtyard or what? The king's courtyard is a clear picture of beauty and splendour by its creators. The colours, materials and layout are all details that show the planning and work that went into bringing this piece of art into its existence.

God as our Creator created the world as His artwork. When we look at the trees, birds and life around us, including, we can only stand in awe of God's creativity. Just look at your eyes and all the detail therein. Your heart and how it beats. How you take each breath without even thinking about it. Everything about you is a portrait of His glory.

God is an artist and our lives are His art.

Art is not only music, paintings or drawings. Every single person has been created by God to exercise and display his or her art based on the desire that God as our Creator has placed in them.

Every piece of art is unique in its own way and should never be compared. The art that God placed inside of you is perfect just for you.

Now, what is your art?

Your art is that activity that makes you feel alive and joyful. It is that part of you that makes you believe there is a God who created the world and is still able to create beauty through your life. Maybe it is writing inspiring words, baking cupcakes or helping your mother around the house or your teacher in the classroom. Maybe it is a sport or playing a musical instrument. It may even be that you are able to always see the best in other people or just be happy with who you are. God placed a beautiful piece of art in each one of us that comes alive in and through us while being in God's presence.

We all bear the image of our creative God and we are able to create art because of Him. God shows Himself to the world through us and the beauty He does through us.

If we return to our verse on the king's courtyard there is so much more for us to learn about this piece of art. God even used colours and objects and many other things in the Bible to bring a deeper meaning to His Word. All of it for us to discover the beauty and meaning hidden in God's Word. Every colour or object is a symbol of someone or something. As an example, let's look at a few colours and things that were used to show us the deeper meaning of the king's courtyard as a piece of art.

White speaks of purity, spotless, righteousness, innocence and truth.

Blue refers to a divine revelation, blessings, or the Holy Spirit.

Purple speaks of royalty, majestic and noble.

Gold symbolises God's glory, wisdom, and righteousness.

Silver symbolises redemption and the blood of Jesus.

Black speaks of sin.

Garden speaks of a love relationship.

Couch means a position of rest.

Curtains refer to intimacy.

Linen speaks of the righteousness of the saints.

Pillars reflect a position of authority, security and stability.

If we look at the king's courtyard again and take into account what the colours used and the objects symbolises, I want to show you how we can find Jesus therein. The king's courtyard symbolises Jesus' perfect work on the cross for us. God desires to have a love and intimate relationship (garden and curtains) with us. God sent Jesus who was blameless and spotless (white) to redeem us (silver) from our sin (black). Because of His perfect work, we gained

His righteousness (gold) and we can rest in Him (couch). His Holy Spirit now dwells in us (blue) and we became part of His royalty (purple).

This is just to show you what this verse symbolises and there is so much more to find in it. You excited yet to dig into your Bible and finds God's hidden treasures? I hope so!

Food for thought:

- 1) Every single word, name or colour has a deeper meaning.
- 2) Have you found other places in the Bible where colours are used? Do you recognise the importance thereof?
- 3) Do you know what art God gave you? If you are not sure yet, ask Him to reveal your art to you and how He wants to use it through you.

[illegible]

Devotional 2: Free Will



Esther 1:8: By edict of the king, no limits were placed on the drinking, for the king had instructed all his palace officials to serve each man as much as he wanted. (NLT)

During the king's feast he allowed the guests to drink as much as they wanted, but only if they wanted to. There was no obligation on them to do so and the king never forced them to drink either. God works with us in the same way. He gave Jesus as our salvation and He is always available to us. It is our choice whether we are going to accept Jesus or not. God loves us so much. He will never force us to accept Jesus but rather wants us to do so because we want to. The decision remains ours.

Jesus wants nothing more than to be a part of our lives. He knows we need Him more than anything or anyone else but He will not force Himself onto us. He does not want us to accept Him because we feel obliged to but because we love Him. The Bible also tells us that it is the goodness of the Lord that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). This means, that when we see the perfect sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the cross, by taking our sin on Him and giving us His righteousness with God, we want to repent and make Him our Saviour.

It is not about our doing, whether we are doing something right or wrong that makes us accept Him, but it is gift of grace from God to us. We have the choice to make it our own.

The following verses also show us the choice we have:

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Revelation 3:20)

I call heaven and earth to witness this day against you that I have set before you life and death, the blessings and the curses; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live. (Deuteronomy 30:19 AMP)

The following verse tells us about our desire to have Him in our lives. He created us that way and we will only be satisfied and happy until we fill that God-shaped hole in our hearts with Him.

God created us with a desire in our hearts that can only be filled by Him. He chose us before the foundation of the earth to become part of Him and the plans He has for us (Ephesians 1:4-5).

A final thought I want to leave you with is this:

- 1) Jesus' name means salvation.
- 2) Our Salvation in Jesus is a choice, not an effort. We cannot earn it, but we can choose it.
- 3) Jesus loves you unconditionally and would want nothing more than to have a personal relationship with you. He chose you before you were born.
- 4) Also, check out these verses, **Romans 5:8** and **Ephesians 2:8-10**

Devotional 3: Feasting with Jesus



Esther 1:9: the same time, Queen Vashti gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes. (NLT)

While the king was giving a feast for the men, Queen Vashti was doing the same for the women, but separately. A feast was known to be filled with plenty of food, drinks, music and lots of people celebrating together. The same way the king and queen gave feasts to the men and women, our King Jesus prepares a feast for us.

He sets the table for each one of us and personally invites us to our own feast. It is not like any feast you have seen in a movie or real life. It is even better. Jesus takes pleasure in providing for us with all the good things He has to offer.

Everything we need, He gives us:

Righteousness, to know we are always right with Him, even when we make mistakes. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Grace, to know we are accepted in and by Jesus, nothing we do or say can break us away from the embrace of His love. All the good things we receive in life is all because of Him. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Mercy, as He already took the punishment for our sins and therefore we can walk in victory today as Jesus gained that for us on the Cross. (Isaiah 53:5)

Purpose, as God has a good plan for our lives, plans to prosper and to give us hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)

Love, to stand secure in Him. (Romans 8:37-39)

Wisdom, to make the right decisions and follow His plan for our lives. (Proverbs 9:10)

Peace, to know that He is always with us and to guide us in His way. We do not have to fear as Jesus is with us. (John 14:27).

Joy, to get up every day with hope that good things will happen to us. (Psalm 30:5)

Provision, for everything we need to live each day. Jesus equips us so that we lack nothing. (Philippians 4:19, Psalm 23:1)

Life, overflowing with Jesus' goodness. We can wake up every morning knowing we have everything we need and more, even if it does not always feel that way. In Jesus, we already have victory over any darkness, sickness or pain we may feel or see. (John 10:10)

Is it not wonderful to know that when Jesus died for you on the Cross and rose again, He made a way for you to have everything you need today and much more? He thought about you in person as He overcame every sickness, disease, hurt or shortcoming you may ever experience. He placed you in a position of victory in Him at the right hand of God.

The feast that Jesus prepares for you and me is unique. We read in Psalms 23:5, **"You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings."** (NLT)

The Bible says that even when storms rise against us or people oppose us, Jesus is there and He needs us to rest in Him as He is already preparing a feast of victory for us. The Bible does not say we will not have enemies, we will, but when they arise, we should give our battle to Jesus and sit with Him at the table knowing that He has already overcome everything and everyone. He has prepared the table for us and we get to enjoy the feast He prepares for us.

It gets even better...

Jesus anoints us with His oil and provides us with blessings and honor. The oil speaks of the Holy Spirit whom God gave to live in us and to lead us in God's way and desire for our lives. When Jesus provides for us, we have no lack. Our cups overflow with His goodness and mercy!

Food for thought: Jesus has prepared a special feast just for you. Your seat is ready, you only need to sit down and enjoy His company.

Devotional 4: Filled with the Holy Spirit



Esther 1:10 "On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha and Abagtha, Zethar and Carkas, the seven eunuchs who served in the presence of King Ahasuerus," (ESV)

The King drank a lot of wine during the feast and the result thereof was that he became drunk from all the wine that he drunk. The drunkenness led him to do things he would not have done otherwise. It makes one think, doesn't it? Would you want to use or drink something that causes you to act in a way that you will later regret?

The Bible also tells us about another kind of drunkenness...the good kind!

We learn about that in Ephesians 5:18-20:

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for

everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." (ESV)

When a person is filled with the wrong things, it leads to no good, but when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are more likely to perform acts that will bring glory to God. If you had a choice, would you want to make God sad or bring Him glory?

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, our lives will become a song to the Lord. We will be grateful for everything we have and our lives will reflect humility and honour because we know Jesus.

We should not judge others who might fill their lives with the wrong things, but instead try and show by example, just like Jesus did while He was on earth. We do that by allowing His Holy Spirit who lives in us to work through our lives.

Make a decision today that you are going to live a life reflecting the works of the Holy Spirit in your life. Pray every morning this prayer: Dear God, I want to live a life that honours You. Help me to stay away from things and people that can harm my testimony and help me to allow Your Holy Spirit to be the leader of my life so that wherever I go, my life will bring honour to You. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

Devotional 5: The Beauty to Behold



"to bring Queen Vashti before the king, wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the people and the officials, for she was beautiful to behold."
(Esther 1:11 NKJV)

We learn from the Book of Esther that the King was a worldly man as he did not believe in God. He chose his queen based on her outward beauty and he had pride in that. In verse 11 of chapter 1 we just read that after the King drank too much wine, he wanted Queen Vashti to appear before the men so that he could show off her beauty, **"for she was beautiful to behold"**.

The world values and admires outward beauty, but what matters to God?

God gives us His answer through His Word.

"But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."" (1 Samuel 16:7 NKJV);

and

“Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” (1 Peter 3:3-4 NKJV).”

God does not value us based on how we look to the world, but on how He sees us—our inner beings. He created all of us and therefore He is happy and satisfied with how we look...His masterpieces. Not one of us was a mistake, but a job well done. What matters to Him is what we do with ourselves—the way we think, speak and act because that shows what is happening in our hearts.

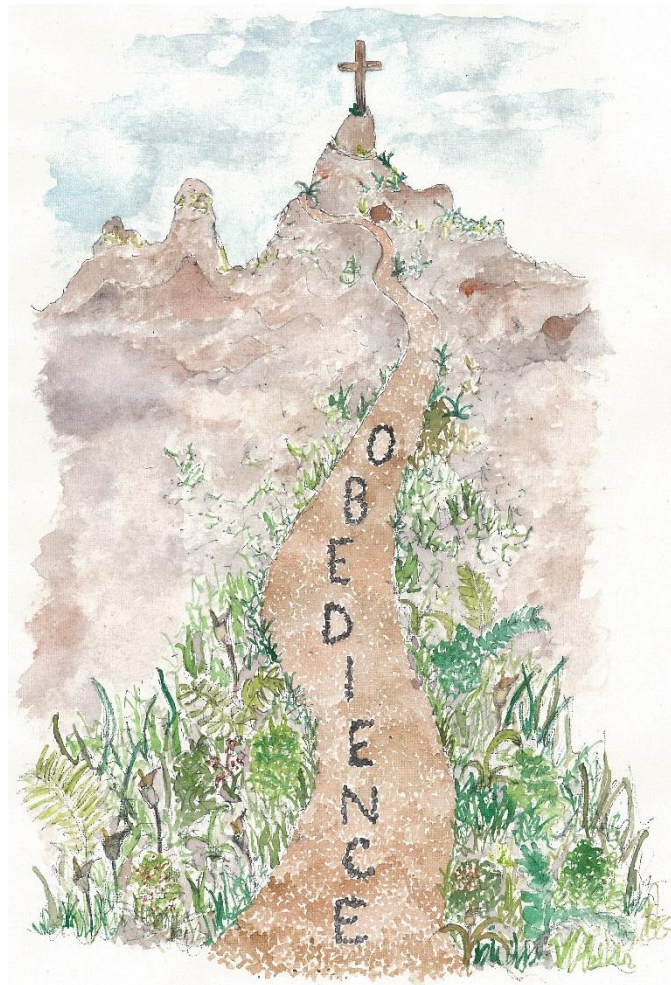
There is nothing wrong with beauty but if anyone should get the glory or praises for it, it is God and not us.

How we look does not always reflect God through us, but how we think, speak and act are where He is shown through our lives. That is what matters to Him. Do not spend so much of your time making sure you are looking good that it steals your time with God.

First look after your inner-man by spending time in God's Word, praying and just being with Him because as you spend time with Him, He will begin to transform your appearance to the world. People will notice a shine in your eyes and a peace in your life that no amount of glitter or make-up can give you.

I want to leave you with the following questions to ponder over as part of your journey to put Jesus first in your life so that He can be found whether you go: What are you thinking about all the time? Are your thoughts on Jesus and how you can be more like Him or are they on yourself? How do you speak when you are happy and when you are angry? Do your words bring peace and comfort to others or are the harsh and unforgiving? Are you obedient or do you look for opportunities to follow your own will? Would you like your behaviour to show that you know Jesus? What kind of behaviour do you think shows that you are a daughter of God?

Devotional 6: Obedience above Sacrifice



Esther 1:12, "But Queen Vashti refused to come at the king's command brought by his eunuchs; therefore the king was furious, and his anger burned within him." (NKJV)

The king drank lots of wine and requested Queen Vashti to appear before him and his men to show off her beauty. Queen Vashti didn't want to do what the king asked, and things didn't go very well for her. Her disobedience to the king caused her to lose her position as queen.

We have a King that asks us to do things too. Sometimes what He asks us to do is hard, but it's better to obey and trust God rather than to try and do things our own way. Esther is a clear example of someone who obeyed God even though she had to risk her life for it.

Esther was obedient to God's purpose for her life which was to save her people. She had to appear before the King without Him asking for her. No matter the risk, Esther still did it, she fasted and prayed and on the third day she entered the king's quarters to invite him to have

a feast with her. What followed from there was God's favour over Esther. Esther's obedience brought about greater blessings in her life of influence than she ever thought possible.

Another part of Esther's obedience that was fascinating is that she was also always obedient to Mordecai, who raised her, even when she was not with him. How often do you still obey your superiors when you are not with them? If you know doing something specific is wrong, but no one is watching, would you still do it?

If we look at the ultimate form of obedience it can be no other than our King Jesus. He had to literally give up His life for us in order to obey God's will for His life. It was the hardest thing Jesus had to do, and He did it. His love for us was too great to be disobedient to God.

Can you see the importance of obeying God? Are there times when you are disobedient? Will you choose obedience?

Remember, God is always with us and when we choose to disobey, He always knows about it and our disobedience have consequences. There is honour in obeying, even when no one is watching. At the end of the day, every act of obedience or disobedience is towards God. When you choose to honour God through your obedience, you will see a difference in your life. God will make things happen for you that others can only dream about.

Devotional 7: The Holy Spirit, Your Adviser



Esther 1:13: Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times. (NIV)

Whenever the king had an important decision to make, he consulted wise men who knew a lot about the law and what was right and wrong according to the customs during those times. The advice the king received helped him to make well informed decisions.

Today, you and I also have an Adviser that can help us to make the right decisions. For example, the right words to use in a conversation, which friend to choose, which course to study, which school to attend, deciding on how you are going to treat a friend who hurt you, who do you allow to give insight into your life. Do you know who this Personal Adviser is?

Yes, you are right. The Holy Spirit.

You are God's precious daughter. He has given His Holy Spirit to be your personal adviser. His Holy Spirit who dwells in you possess all the wisdom and insight you might need to make the right decisions. He knows things which we still has to learn. He sees beyond the visible.

He can see what tomorrow will bring and the best part of all of it is that the Holy Spirit wants to share His wisdom with us.

Look what 1 John 2:27 says, *“But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.”*

The Holy Spirit knows everything we need. If we will let the Holy Spirit guide us in the decisions we make, we do not have to suffer the consequences of making bad decisions. The reality is that we all do make bad decisions from time to time and none of that can keep us from God's grace or from the guidance or willingness of the Holy Spirit to teach us the right way to go. He is always there and always willing to help us make the right decisions. We only need to ask for His inputs and listen to His guidance.

Food for thought for the next time you need to make a decision:

- 1) The next time you need to make a decision, ask the Holy Spirit what you should do.
- 2) Then, take a few moments to listen to what He tells you. He can speak in many different ways to us, it may be through a knowing in your heart, a thought, a bible verse, a song, or maybe even through a picture.
- 3) Remember, the Holy Spirit is inside you and wants to be a part of every decision you make (even the clothes you are going to wear). If you will let Him guide, He will help you to stay on the right path for your life.

Devotional 8: Meaning in a Name



Esther 1:14: *those closest to him being Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who had access to the king's presence, and who ranked highest in the kingdom):*

The Bible provides a list of the men whom the king consulted. They were his wise men. I don't know about you but I always skipped a list of names when I read my Bible, thinking they are nothing more than names until I learnt there is much more to them.

If we look at the list of names in Esther 1:14, it tells us a lot more about Jesus. Let's have a look.

Carshena means *illustrious*.

Shethar speaks of a *star*.

Admatha means *given by the highest*.

Tarshish speaks of the *sea coast or refers to a son*.

Meres means *lofty*.

Marsena means *worthy*.

Memucan means *dignity*.

Furthermore, we read that these seven princes saw the king's face and was first in His kingdom, meaning they spent a lot of time in the presence of the King.

If we now put all these meanings into the context of the verse above, this is what we find: An illustrious (noteworthy) Star was given to us by God (the highest), which was His Son, who is lofty and worthy to be praised. He is majestic (dignified) and our perfect (seven) Prince. He is the highest ranked in God's kingdom and He gives us access to God's presence.

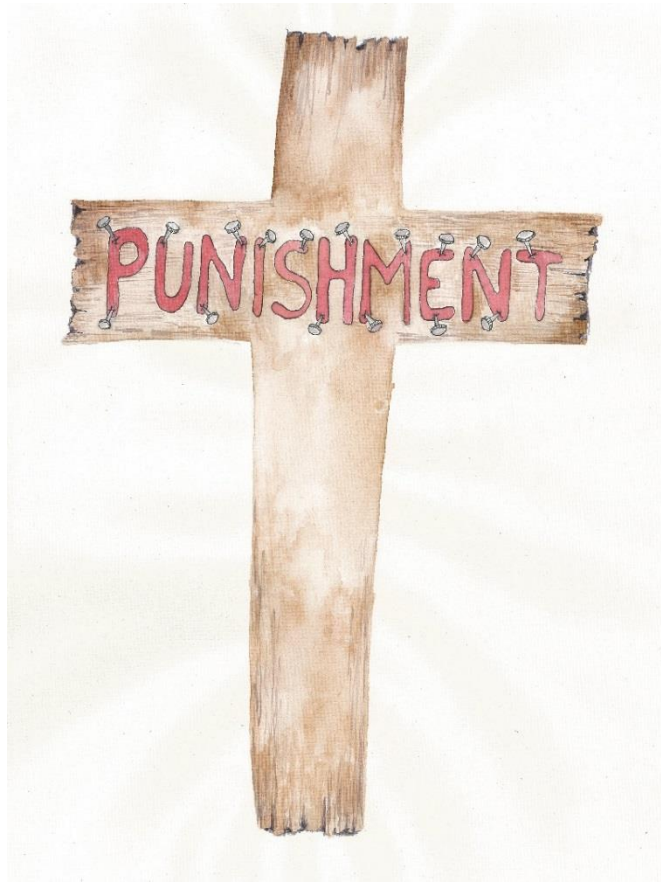
How amazing is that? A list of names telling us about how God gave us Jesus and through Him we get access to God's presence.

Food for thought:

- 1) Every time when you read your Bible invite Jesus to sit with you and ask Him to show Himself to you as you read. Do not be surprised if He amazes you.
- 2) Look at the list of names in Matthew 1 and see if you can find the story of Jesus, who was without sin, who came to earth to die for our sins so that we can have eternal life through Him.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Devotional 9: Your Punishment is Pinned to the Cross



Esther 1:15, “What shall we do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus brought to her by the eunuchs?” (NKJV)

Queen Vashti disobeyed the King’s command and for that she had to be punished. Today, we also have a King and we should obey His will for our lives, but if we don’t, what happens to us?

Queen Vashti lived in the Old Testament times and there you had to do good to get blessings and when you disobeyed a law, you had to suffer the punishment.

The punishment for our sins is death. As hard as it may sound, that is what we deserve...but as a child of God, we were introduced to mercy (this means, we do not have to endure the bad consequences we deserve) and grace (this means, we get the good consequences we do not deserve).

Today, we live under the New Covenant of Grace which was sealed and began when Jesus died on the Cross for our sins. From that moment, the punishment of death which we

deserve, Jesus already took upon Him so we do not have to suffer that punishment again (mercy). Now, we get to enjoy a living with Jesus by just believing what He did for us on the cross, without earning this (favour).

When we are disobedient to Jesus, we deserve to be punished by God, but because Jesus was already punished on our behalf, we do not have to endure the same punishment of death again. Our disobedience may have consequences like being disciplined for example, if we disobey our parents, they will correct us, but our disobedience does not prevent God from loving us.

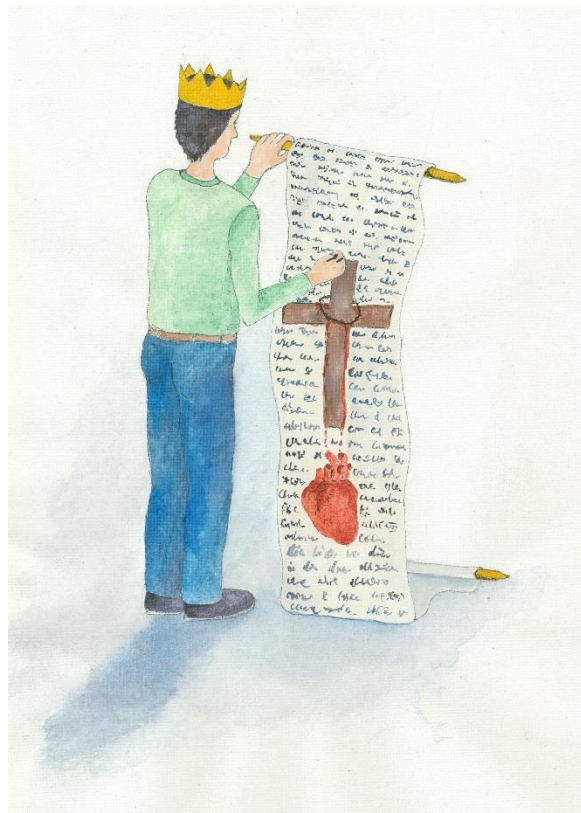
We can still have a personal relationship with Jesus and He still loves us unconditionally. When we begin to understand the grace we receive from Jesus, we will no longer want to do wrong but because we always have the benefit of the doubt, we will want to do good.

Think about the following verse and ask yourself, what does this mean to me?

“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5 NKJV)

[illegible]

Devotional 10: God's Decree



Esther 1:20: When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small.

When a king makes a decree it is a declaration or pronouncement which everybody must abide by. If people did not follow it, there was the risk of judgment. The king has the power to make any decree he feels is necessary for his kingdom. In the same way, we read about God who has made a decree to humankind more than 2000 years ago about our salvation, which we are invited to live by today.

God saw that His children were going down the wrong track and continued to sin and moved away from Him. God as a loving father did not want to lose His children, so He made a plan. His plan included a decree in which God causes all things to work out for our good (Romans 8:28). God's decree for our salvation involved sending His Son, Jesus to die for our sins so that we would not be lost but be found for the good that Jesus wants to do through us.

The decree was signed when Jesus shed His blood on the cross and took the punishment for all our sins. From that day forward, every person that believes in Him has eternal life. The decree is simple, "Believe in Jesus as your Saviour and you will forever be righteous and saved for eternity."

Today, we walk under the divine decree of our salvation in Jesus because of His love. What God decreed always comes to pass but it remains our choice whether we want to follow it and accept Jesus as our Saviour. If we do accept Him, we become believers and have genuine hope and every promise in God's Word is available to us. But for unbelievers, judgment will come as they chose to give away their gift of eternity which Jesus bought for all of us.

If you have never made a stance and accepted Jesus as your Saviour and the Lord over your life, I would like to give you an opportunity today to do that. Before we start I want you to know, Jesus loves you and when He gave His life on the cross He had you on His mind and would have done it even if you were the only person He was dying for. Okay, ready?

Let's pray:

Jesus, thank you for Your life which You gave up on the cross so that I can have victory over death and have life because of You. I accept my salvation in You and I want to make it real in my life. Come into my heart and be the Lord and Saviour of my life because I know now that without You Jesus, I am limited in myself, but with You I can do the impossible because of Your power that is available to me. Thank You Jesus, Amen.

Food for thought:

- 1) Look up **John 14:6**. What does it tell you about Jesus?
- 2) What does **Ephesians 3:10-12** say about what Jesus achieved for us on the cross? What does verse 12 tell us can we now do, through faith, because of Jesus' great sacrifice?

Devotional 11: No Need for Regret



Esther 2:1, “AFTER THESE things, when the wrath of King Ahasuerus was pacified, he [earnestly] remembered Vashti and what she had done and what was decreed against her.” (AMP)

King Ahasuerus acted in the spur of the moment without thinking twice when he banished Queen Vashti from her position. When his anger later subsided and he thought about everything that happened, he regretted his actions towards Queen Vashti. He probably wished he could still have her as his queen. We all act and speak sometimes too quickly. Such actions lead to consequences we could have prevented if we just stopped and thought about it carefully before we acted.

Have you ever found yourself in this situation? Have you said things because you were angry and afterwards you wished you could take back your words?

Have you seen these letters before, WWJD? They stand for, “What Would Jesus Do?”. I would like to encourage you again today to take these words to heart before you say or do anything, whether you are in an easy situation or a difficult situation, always ask yourself this question, What would Jesus do?

Now you may not always know what He would have done, since you are not Him, but that is why we should study the Bible as much as we can to see how Jesus reacted in every situation. The more we get to know Jesus, the more we will know what we should do. So what do you do in the meantime?

Think about what kind of behaviour or words would make Him happy. When someone is rude to you or hurt you? Do you think you should be rude and hurtful in return or rather forgive that person and do or say something that will bring life over them? That kind of response will speak louder about your walk with Jesus than any words you can utter.

Here are some Bible verses that you can memorise that gives us wisdom on how we should act:

“A fool is quick-tempered, but a wise person stays calm when insulted.”
(Proverbs 12:16 NLT)

“Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing.”
(Proverbs 12:18 NLT)

“Wise people think before they act; fools don’t—and even brag about their foolishness.” (Proverbs 13:16 NLT)

“I prayed to the LORD, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears. Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces.” (Psalms 34:4-5 NLT)

Devotional 12: Adopted in Christ



Esther 2:7, "This man had a very beautiful and lovely young cousin, Hadassah, who was also called Esther. When her father and mother died, Mordecai adopted her into his family and raised her as his own daughter." (NLT)

Esther's parents passed away when she was a young girl and Mordecai adopted and raised her like his own child. Esther was very fortunate to have someone who loved her and who was willing to look after her. In the same way, when we accept Jesus as our Saviour, God adopts us as His own sons and daughters.

Look what the Bible says in **1 John 3:1**, ***"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."*** (ESV)

As a child of our parents, we will always be connected to them. We are a part of them as much as they are a part of us. To be part of a loving family gives us a sense of belonging and security. The same way we are part of a physical family, we also have a spiritual family where God is our loving Father.

Ephesians 1:5 says, "he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will," (ESV)

As believers in Jesus, we are adopted by God as His sons and daughters. Even if our parents did not want us here on earth, God wants us just as we are. God never meant for you to be alone, but to be a part of Him. He wants to be your loving Father and He wants to be good to you. He wants you to feel that you belong and are secure in Him.

The love of a parent has no end. God as your Father will go to great extents for you to have joy and love in your life. God wants to fulfil your heart's desire. He may need to discipline you at times and show you the right way which might hurt, but that is because He loves you and does not want you to get hurt unnecessarily.

We never ever have to feel abandoned and left alone, because God is with us and we are His daughters. We are always on His mind. He made us a part of Him and He has become a part of us by His Holy Spirit that lives in us. We are forever bound to God and nothing can snatch us out of His hand.

How does it make you feel to know that God loves you like His own, the apple of His eye? Every morning when you wake up, declare that you are a beloved child of God. You are always on His mind and He loves you as His own child.

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Devotional 13: How to Stand Out



Esther 2:9, “Hegai was very impressed with Esther and treated her kindly. He quickly ordered a special menu for her and provided her with beauty treatments. He also assigned her seven maids specially chosen from the king’s palace, and he moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem.” (NLT)

If you were chosen as part of a group of the most beautiful girls in your country, what would you do to win that competition? Will you rely on your own ideas and efforts to make yourself look even more beautiful, or would you listen to the people who know what it takes to win the competition?

Esther did just that. She was part of a chosen group of girls who participated in a contest for a year to be ultimately chosen as the queen. She did not rely on her own beauty and efforts to be the best but she humbled herself and followed the advice of Hegai. He knew the King's preferences and she obeyed and did only what he told her.

Soon she found favour in Hegai's eyes as he was pleased with her. He provided her with extra special treatment and accessories to make her look beautiful for the king.

Do you see that Esther did not strive to win but she humbled herself and rested in the Lord, knowing that her favour will come from Him?

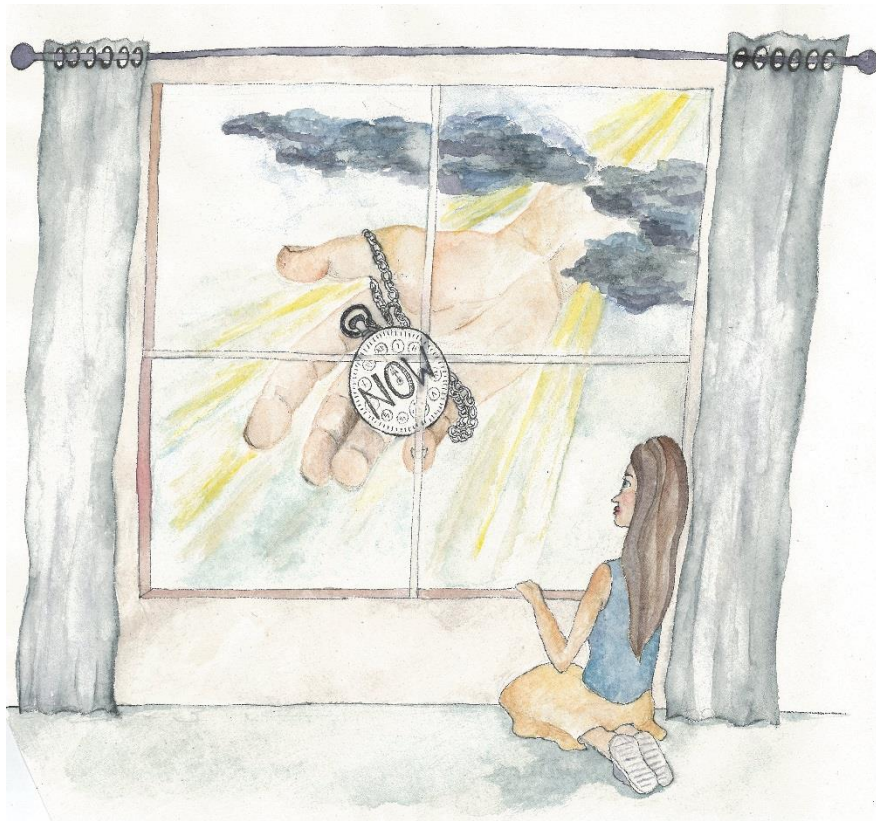
When you really want something, do not depend on your own efforts but only depend on Jesus. Let Him lift you up to places you have never been before.

When you depend on Jesus, He will make you stand out above all crowds and His favor and "heavenly liking" will be seen in your life. Look what else Jesus says about His favor on your life in **Psalm 5:12!**

Is there something you really want? Have you tried to get it yourself? How about you try out Jesus on this one?

Pray with me, "Jesus, I know that You know my heart's desire. I have tried to get it myself, but I know I cannot do it as well as You. I rest in You, Jesus, to have favour on me and to take me to the places You planned for me. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Devotional 14: For Such a Time a This



Esther 4:14: "For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (NKJV)

Have you ever wondered whether you really have a purpose here on earth? Maybe you have thought of yourself as a mistake? I have news for you: God has ordained you for such a time as this!

Hebrews 3:1 also says, "SO THEN, brethren, consecrated and set apart for God, who share in the heavenly calling, [thoughtfully and attentively] consider Jesus,..." (AMP)

You are no mistake. You were perfectly planned by God to live right now in this time, wherever you are right now and for a very specific purpose!

We do not always know the paths our lives are going to take and that is what makes our journeys so exciting! You take a step of faith every day that you get out of bed, waiting for God to show you the way and every night you lay down in peace, knowing God is in control and He has good plans for you.

Like Esther, who had to wait a whole year for God's plan for her life to fall into place, in the same way, God's plan for your life may take time. She never tried to make things happen sooner than they were supposed to happen, but she waited for God's perfect time to bring the purpose of her life to pass. Are you prepared to wait no matter how long it takes for God's plan for your life to come to pass? Do you know the plans God has for you?

Remember, even when you make wrong turns, God's plan for you NOW still remains, and He will have the last say.

When Haman wanted to kill all the Jewish people, God called Esther to save her people. A three day fast and prayer was entered before Esther entered the King's quarters. Esther risked her life and did not allow her fears to miss out on God's plan for her. If you choose not to follow His way, for whatever reason, He will still let His purpose be fulfilled, even if it means He needs to use someone else. Would you want to miss out on the good plans God has for you?

Page also over to **Jeremiah 29:11** to see what God says about the plans He has for you!
