



*Writings
in the
Wind*

KYLEE KOSOFF

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WRITINGS IN THE WIND

by Kylee Kosoff

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Autumn' s Book

Autumn leaves crinkle like pages from a book.
As Winter chill comes to fall, I curl up in a nook.
Just like books, leaves come in all different colors.
Yellow, orange, red— Get the rakes from the shed!
For a brief moment, autumn is a painter's palette.
Where leaves from Cottonwood trees are met
With leaves from Russian Olives.
Just like books, leaves are full of stories
Waiting for you and me to read Autumn's glories.



Elements

This series focuses on the elements of air, water, earth, and fire.

I wrote these during September 2019.

One of my teachers encouraged us to get our writing out now. This stuck with me and gave me the fortitude I needed to stick with it.

These were the first devotions that I wrote for the blog, and they were accompanied by Winnie the Pooh pictures. They set the theme for the whole of the blog which was to be a still, small voice.

This time of my life was loud and crazy. I was in a whirlwind of change. And I needed the stillness to figure out what God was doing.



Writings in the Wind: A Still, Small Voice

Wind reminds me of my Granny.

Every time the wind picked up, she would holler, “Wind Blow!”

The wind always played with the dust. Blowing it all over always targeting our eyes.

Our dogs would run for cover, and we wouldn’t be far behind them.

The leaves would shake and tremble while the grass would shiver. The wind ruined family-get-togethers and Fourth of July parties.

I didn’t care for the wind too much when I was a kid. But now that I’m older there’s something beautiful about the wind.

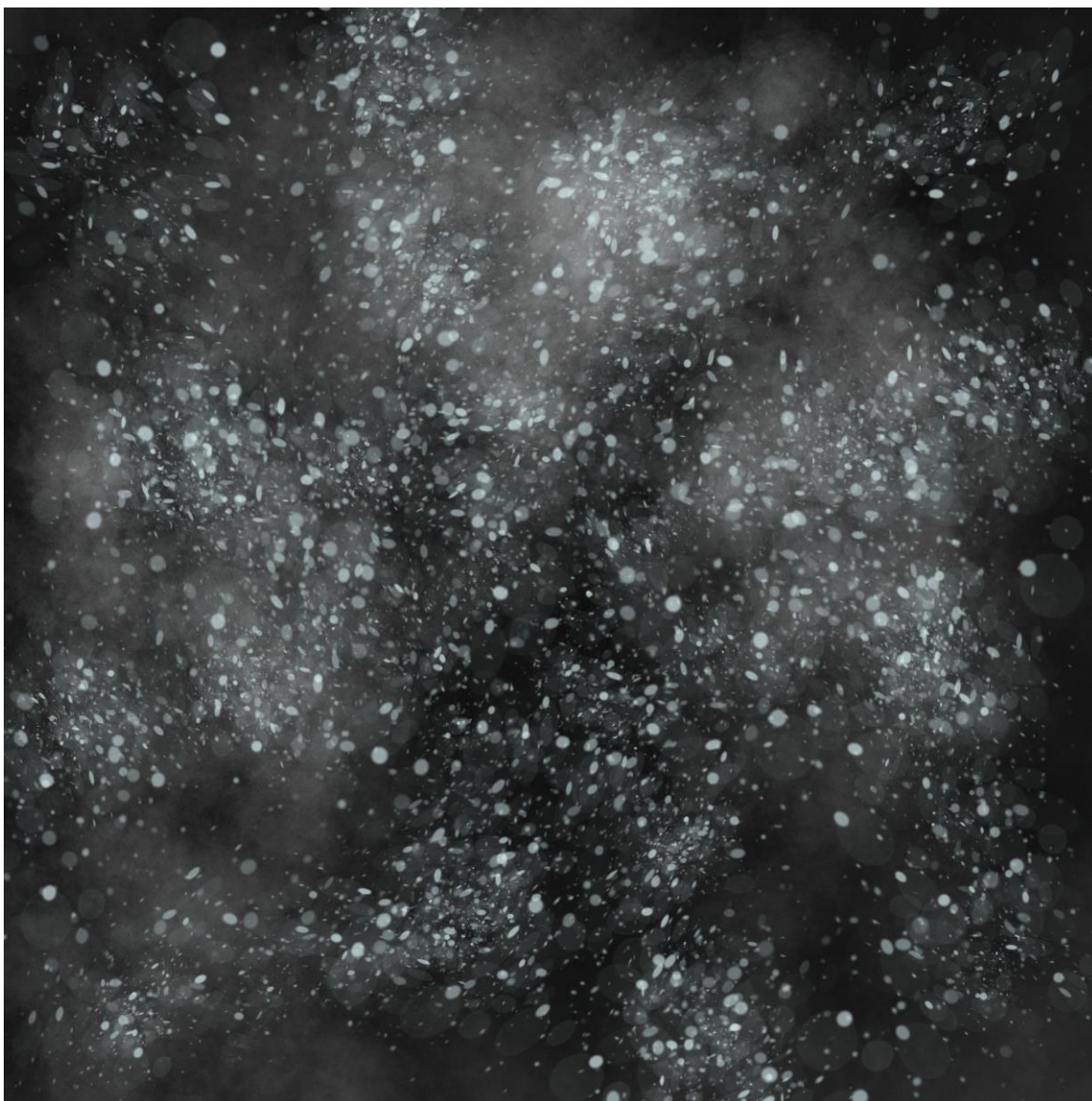
Something invisible, yet it can't be ignored. Something that can be soft and refreshing, yet also screeching and destructive.

Wind reminds me of 1 Kings 19:11-12 (KJV),

11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake:

12 And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

I find it fascinating that Almighty God, Creator of the Universe, the Alpha and Omega chose to speak in a still, small voice. Sometimes the greatest things are small. Sometimes there's beauty in the ordinary. Sometimes we just need to listen.



Struggles in the Storm

Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote, “Water, water everywhere.”

I can’t help but think of rain when I think of water. Rain comes when it’s least wanted, but always when it’s needed.

I’ve never really liked rain, but I love flowers. I didn’t realize the connection until recently. Growing up in a desert, flowers were always scarce. This summer, flowers covered the desert. I’ve never seen anything like it, and I probably won’t see something like it for a very long time.

The flowers were a result from all the storms we received during winter and spring. The desert blooms if there’s enough rain. Rain comes from storms.

Isaiah 35:1 (KJV)

The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

Most of us don't like storms whether physical, mental, or spiritual. Storms shake our foundation, cause us to slip, and scare our faith.

When we're little, we run to our parents during storms because we're scared. When we're older, we toss and turn because we can't sleep through storms. Storms make us feel overwhelmed, but the storms we face come when we need them the most.

We're just like the wildflowers and cacti of the desert; we can't bloom without rain. Each of our storms are different because we're different flowers with different needs. Desert flowers don't need consistent rainfall like Floridian flowers.

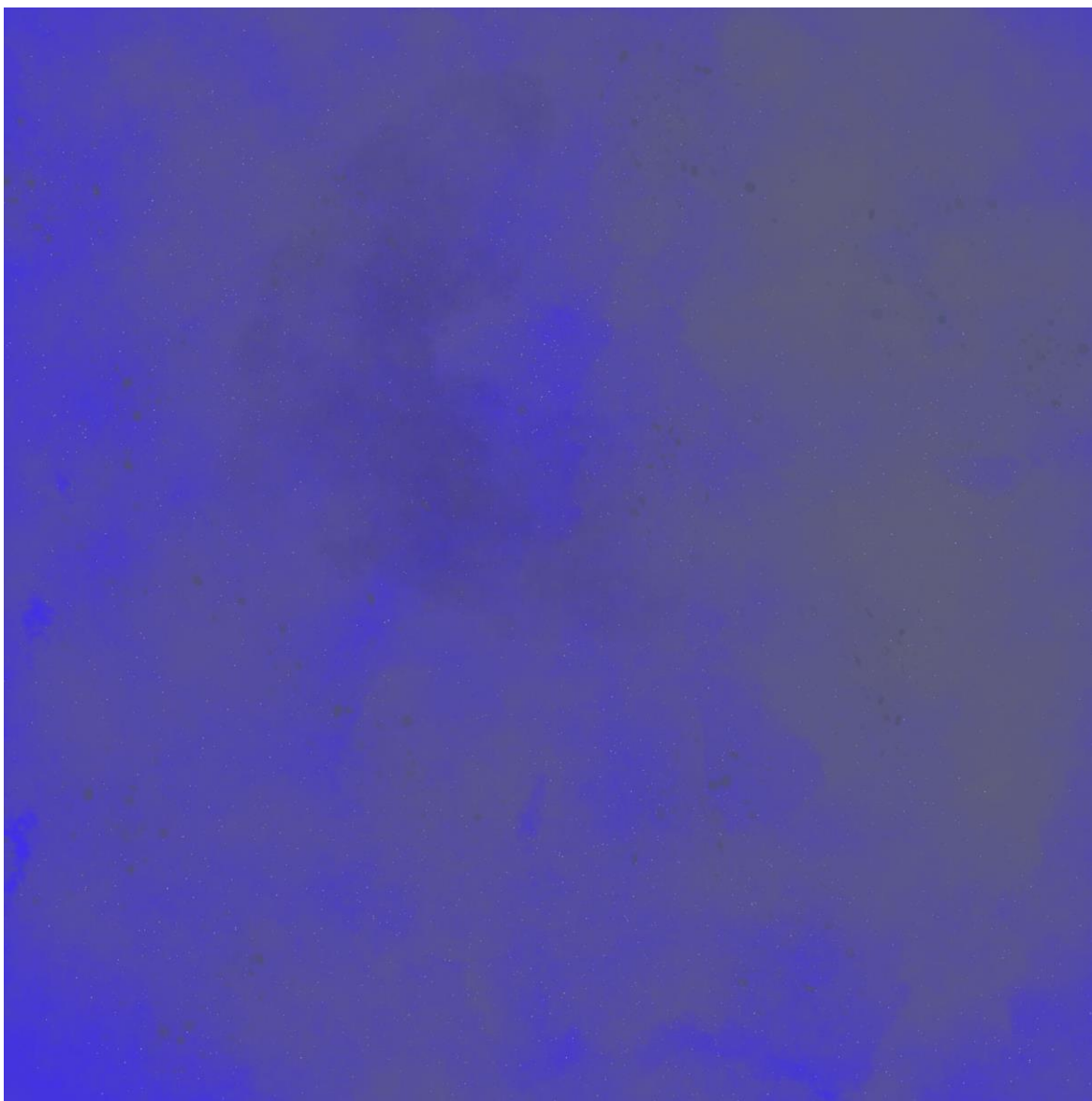
God brings storms into our life to help us grow. Growing is painful and scary, but it's a part of life.

Isaiah 55:8-10 (KJV)

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:



Pits of Pessimism

“Life is hard, but God is faithful.” —Mr. McBride

Sometimes, I can be a Disney-downer. It seems I have more bad days than good, more struggles than successes, and more days in the pit than on the mountain.

Life is hard. That’s just a fact. It doesn’t matter if you’re rich, poor, or in between. It doesn’t matter if you’re American, Chinese, or from Mars. It doesn’t matter if you’re in high school, college, or the real world.

Everyone struggles; we just hide it from each other. I think of Pilgrim’s Progress and the Pit of Despair, or Joseph when his brothers throw him in a pit. All of us end up in a pit at some point, and most of us more than once.

The pit would be the lowest of the low, the valley would be every-day life, and the mountain would be excelsior (ever higher).

When we finally reach the mountain, all we want to do is go higher, but unfortunately, we can't stay on the mountain.

"Everyone wants to live on a mountain, but all the happiness and growth occurs while you are climbing it." —Andy Rooney

When I was a kid, I went to a summer camp up in the mountains. I also had the opportunity to be on staff as a co-counselor two years ago. Camp life is literally a mountain-top experience. Everything is extreme and heightened.

For a whole, week you're saturated in fun and in God. You leave with the camp high which usually evaporates as soon as you're down the mountain. Just like we don't spend forever on the mountain, we don't spend forever in the pit. Usually, our lives are in the valley.

"Mountaintops are for views and inspiration, but fruit is grown in the valleys." —Billy Graham

As a girl, who grew up in a literal valley; I think it's important to remember that there is beauty in the valley.

We grow weary of valleys and take them for granted.

Psalm 32:7 (KJV)

Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

I think most of us would prefer to stay on the mountain or in the valley, but David recognizes that God's with us in the pit.



Faith in the Fire

I actually love fires. I think of flames dancing in a myriad of reds, oranges, and yellows; embers floating into the night air like little stars; and smoke following everyone around the campfire.

There's something mystifying about fire. We're warned to stay away because fire can burn us, but it can also warm us.

Fires are lovely, but they can easily lose control.

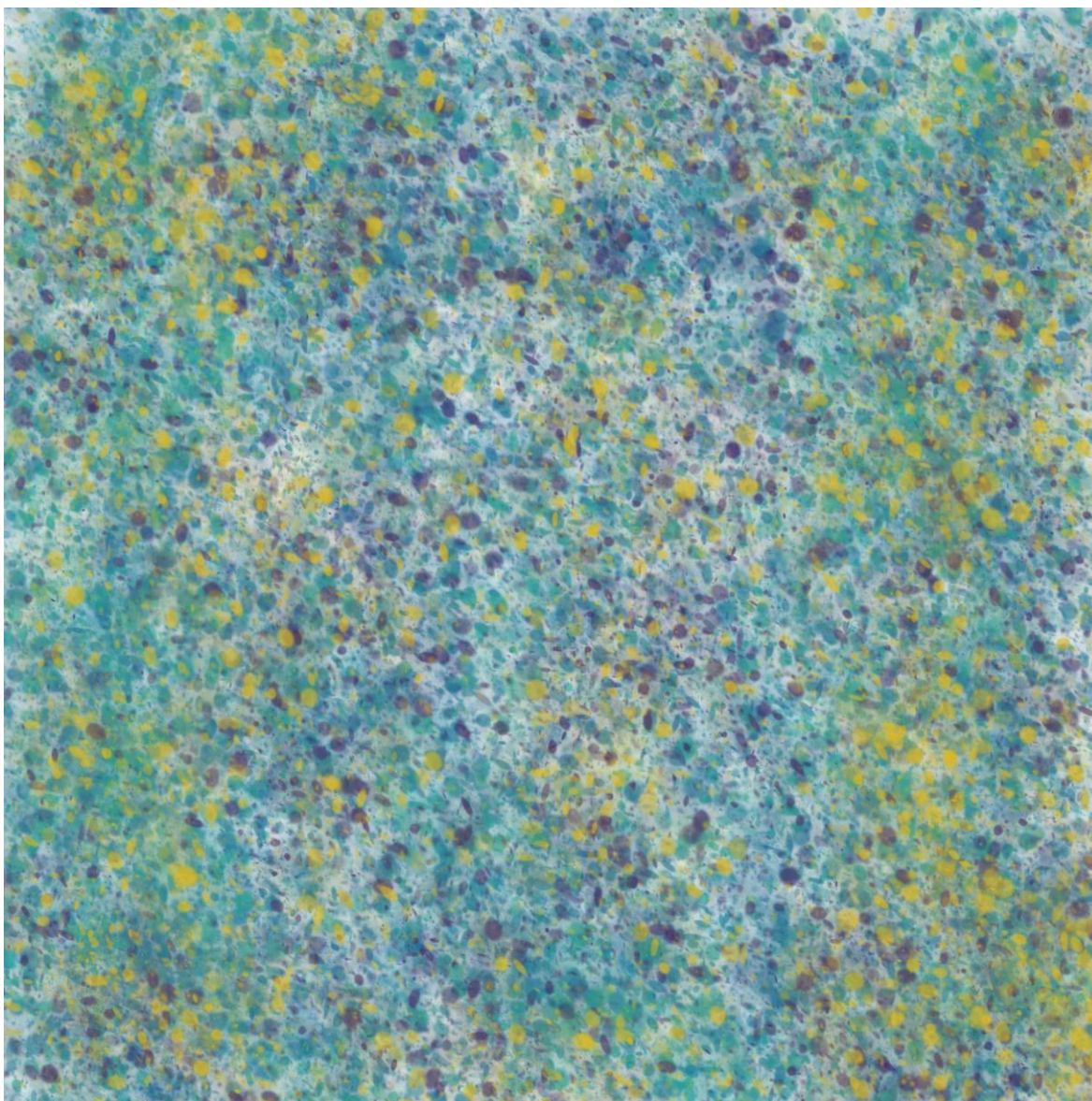
A year ago, the desert was really dry; and wildfires were a summer long struggle. It only takes a rogue ember, a strike of lightning, or a forgotten fire to create a wildfire. Wildfires are destructive and dangerous. But in the wake of their destruction, they leave the ground refreshed.

My grandpa is always burning our fields because fires replenish soil. The forest and the desert are temporarily destroyed by fire, but they come back even stronger.

Psalm 66:10 (KJV)

For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.

Silver is tried through fire. Its imperfections are melted away by intense heat. God does the same thing to us because He wants us to be without blemish.



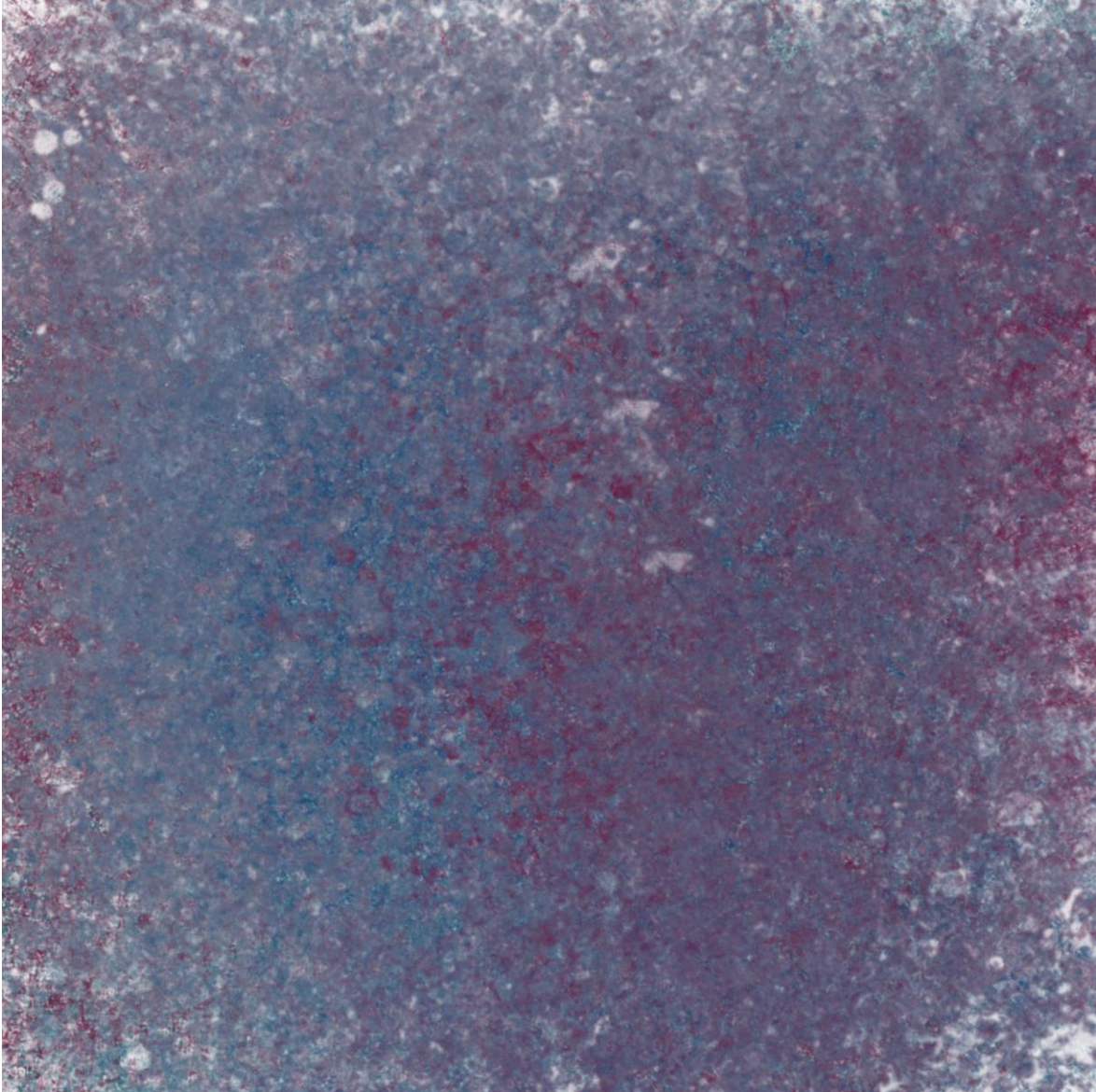
Look to the Animal

This series focuses on God's Creation. I've always loved animals, and I wanted to see what I could learn about God through His creations.

I started writing these in September 2019 and finished them in March 2020.

I focused on some of my favorite animals like lions and tigers. I even looked at some animals that I wasn't as familiar with like peacocks and elephants.

This was a fun way to do devotions!



Look to the Elephant

Proverbs 6:6-8 (KJV)

6 *Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:*

7 *Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,*

8 *Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.*

Throughout the Bible, God uses creation to teach us something. So, let's see what the elephant can teach us.

1. REMEMBER THE PAST

Elephants are known for their excellent memories. Scientists believe that their memories help them survive by remembering water sources, finding old friends, and getting through hard conditions.

Similarly, God wants us to remember.

Isaiah 46:9 (KJV)

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me.

Here, God is telling to be like the elephant and remember the past.

Remember what God has done not only in Bible times, but in our lives as well.

Remembering the past helps us survive just like the elephant.

When we face hard conditions, storms, or trials, remembering the past helps us remember that God is still working.

I find it helpful to keep a notebook where I write down reminders of what God has done for me.

2. WALK WITH DIGNITY AND LEAD WITH WISDOM

Elephants choose their leaders not on aggression, but on wisdom, intelligence, and problem-solving skills. Dignity is “the state or quality of being worthy of honor or respect.”

Ephesians 4:1 (KJV)

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.

God calls us to be worthy.

We can't work hard enough to save ourselves, but we can live worthy of being little Christs shining the light wherever we go.

Deuteronomy 1:14 (KJV)

Take you wise men, and understanding and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.

People who are known as wise and understanding are walking with dignity, and they will likely lead with wisdom.

“A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader, but becomes one by the quality of his actions and the integrity of his intent.” —Douglas MacArthur

3. LISTEN WELL

Elephants listen with their giant ears and with their giant feet by feeling vibrations in the ground. This listening keeps them aware of their surroundings and possible threats.

Proverbs 19:20

Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in the latter end.

God commands us to listen.

Specifically, listen to the right things: counsel and instruction. Counsel supports us and keeps us accountable.

Just like elephants, Christians have a herd—the family of God. So, we would do well to listen.

4. PROTECT THE VULNERABLE

When lions attack, elephants form a circle around their young and fiercely defend them.

Galatians 6:2

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Everyone has moments of weakness.

And sometimes, we just need help.

The believer was never meant to go through the Christian walk alone.

Exodus 14:13-14

13 And Moses said unto the people, Fear yet not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

14 The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. Just like baby elephants, we are fiercely defended.

God is often compared to a bird with wings covering the chicks. In the same manner, God is both a nurturer and a protector.

We never need to fear no matter how great the enemy because God surrounds us with His love.



Look to the Parrot: Be Bold

The first things that come to my mind when I think of parrots are: talkative, colorful, and joyous.

We probably all remember, “Polly want a cracker!”

Parrots are one of the few birds who can talk or copy what we say. They parrot boldly, and we should do the same.

God gave us a voice to use for His glory.

Sometimes, that can be uncomfortable, but we were never meant to be silent.

Growing up, I had speech problems, and I really struggled to express myself. Often, I would just be silent because I was ashamed of how I sounded.

But God never meant for us to be ashamed to speak.

Romans 1:16 (KJV)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Just how parrots reflect us, we reflect God. Sharing the gospel with someone is one of the hardest responsibilities of being a Christian, but it is a clear command.

God wants us to be bold for Him just like the parrot.

Parrots are one of the most colorful birds in creation; they come in all kinds of bold colors.

Just like the parrot, God meant for us to be colorful too. We need to be boldly colorful in how we live.

The world should see us and see all the colors of God's rainbow. Each one of us is a different color with a unique calling.

Isaiah 64:8 (KJV)

But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

We are a special part of God's creation because we are the only ones He formed with His hands. He made us each with a different purpose; shaped and molded unique features, and painted us in specific colors.

God wants us to be ourselves because he created each one of us individually.

We're not meant to blend in with the crowd, or look like everyone else, we're meant to stand out in bold colors.

Be joyous. This is something I struggle with, but some of my greatest mentors overflow with joy. Joyful people are a joy to be around!

Here's the secret to joy: Jesus, others, you.

Jesus

Others

You

By putting Jesus first, our lives align how they should.

Philippians 4:4 (KJV)

Rejoice in the Lord away: and again, I say Rejoice.

God literally commands us to be joyful!

And I think that He does this because when we have true joy even the hardest of days can't take it away. I'm not saying that we can't be sad or overwhelmed because let's be honest there are more stormy days than sunny ones.

But by keeping joy in our hearts, we're able to remember and know that God is for us.



Look to the Lion

Lions are literally one of my favorite animals!

One of the reasons I love lions is because of the book *Born Free* by Joy Adamson which tells the incredibly true story of Elsa the lioness who was raised by the author and eventually released into the wild.

“It was nearly a week before we returned. We found her waiting, and very hungry. She was full of affection; we had deceived her so often, broken faith with her, done so much to destroy her trust in us, yet she remained loyal.” —Joy Adamson

Lions are loyal leaders, protective and brave, willing to defend, and are separated from the safari.

1. LOYAL LEADERS

Ruth 1:16 (KJV)

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, [or] to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people [shall be] my people, and thy God my God:

Lions live in a pride. They hunt, raise their young, and fight together. This close-knit relationship requires loyalty. Lions are one of the only big cats that hunt together much less live together.

Most big cats are solitary, but lions literally go against nature by forming prides!

2. PROTECTIVE AND BRAVE

The King of the Jungle's primary job is to protect the pride especially from other rival lions.

1 Peter 5:8 (KJV)

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Rival lions are power hungry. They want to take over the pride usually by killing the leader and the cubs.

In order to prevent this revolution, the reigning lion must be sober and vigilant.

They are protective of their pride and brave in facing those who seek to destroy their own.

3. WILLING TO DEFEND

Lions fight to the death against rival males. Lionesses are fierce in their defense of their young.

Psalm 5:11 (KJV)

But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

Jesus is called the Lion of Judah, and just like a lion, He defends us.

4. SEPARATED FROM THE SAFARI

Lions live separated from those around them in the safari. They're the kings of the jungle, and they know it.

Leviticus 20:24 (KJV)

But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people.

They have a special place in the safari because they are set apart.

Likewise, we are not meant to blend in with the world. We're meant to stand apart in our witness of Christ.



Look to the Tiger

“I don't want you to see only a tiger when you look at me. I want you to see me. The man.”—Colleen Houck

Lions and Tigers—Oh my! So, I know that the last post was about lions; but I also thought it would be interesting to contrast lions with tigers because they're very different cats.

And not to sound redundant, but I love tigers! And, yes, it's because of a book or actually books.

Tiger's Curse by Colleen Houck is one of my favorite series! It's a story about two Indian princes who were cursed hundreds of years ago; and the modern-day girl who's chosen to help break their curse. It's filled with romance, Indian mythology, and tigers! Really fantastic read!

FUN FACTS ABOUT TIGERS

Tigers live in Asia, India, and Russia.

Other than the liger, tigers are the biggest of the big cats.

They love water! Tigers never stray too far from water.

Tigers can't purr.

Just like there are no two tigers alike, there's no two humans alike.

Tigers are the only big cats with distinctive stripes on their hair and skin. No two tigers have the same stripes. Their stripes are like fingerprints. So, Tigger really was right when he said, "The most wonderful things about tiggers is I'm the only one!"

Psalm 139:14 (KJV)

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

God is the master creator.

As a writer and a struggling artist, I am always amazed at God's creations whether it's the painted desert sunsets, the rugged beauty of the mountains, or the unique stripes of tigers.

Tigers are known for being solitary. They hunt alone, they walk alone, and the mother raises the cubs alone.

But there is some research that this isn't always the case. Tigers have a deep sense of family especially when raised together. The mother's devotion is total in that she will sacrifice all to ensure her cubs' survival.

This is rare, but sometimes a tiger and tigress's bond is so strong that both of them will raise the cubs.

Males have been observed providing food for tigresses and cubs (unlike lions when tigers share kills, they let the females and cubs eat first).

Edward B. Baker's Sport in Bengal explains, "This animal is not the unsociable creature it is commonly understood to be. On the contrary, it is fond of consorting with others, and not seldom three or four may be found together; a mother and nearly full-grown cubs; both parents and half-grown ones, or a charming party of young males and females living and hunting together for a considerable length of time."

Although tigers are fond of company, they understand that more often than not one must walk alone. As Christians, we never truly have to walk alone, but sometimes it can feel like it.

This reminds me of David when he was running for his life. He had to leave everything his wife, his family, and his best friend. David had many moments in his life when he felt as if he were alone.

Psalms 38:6-11 (KJV)

6 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.

7 For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh.

8 I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.

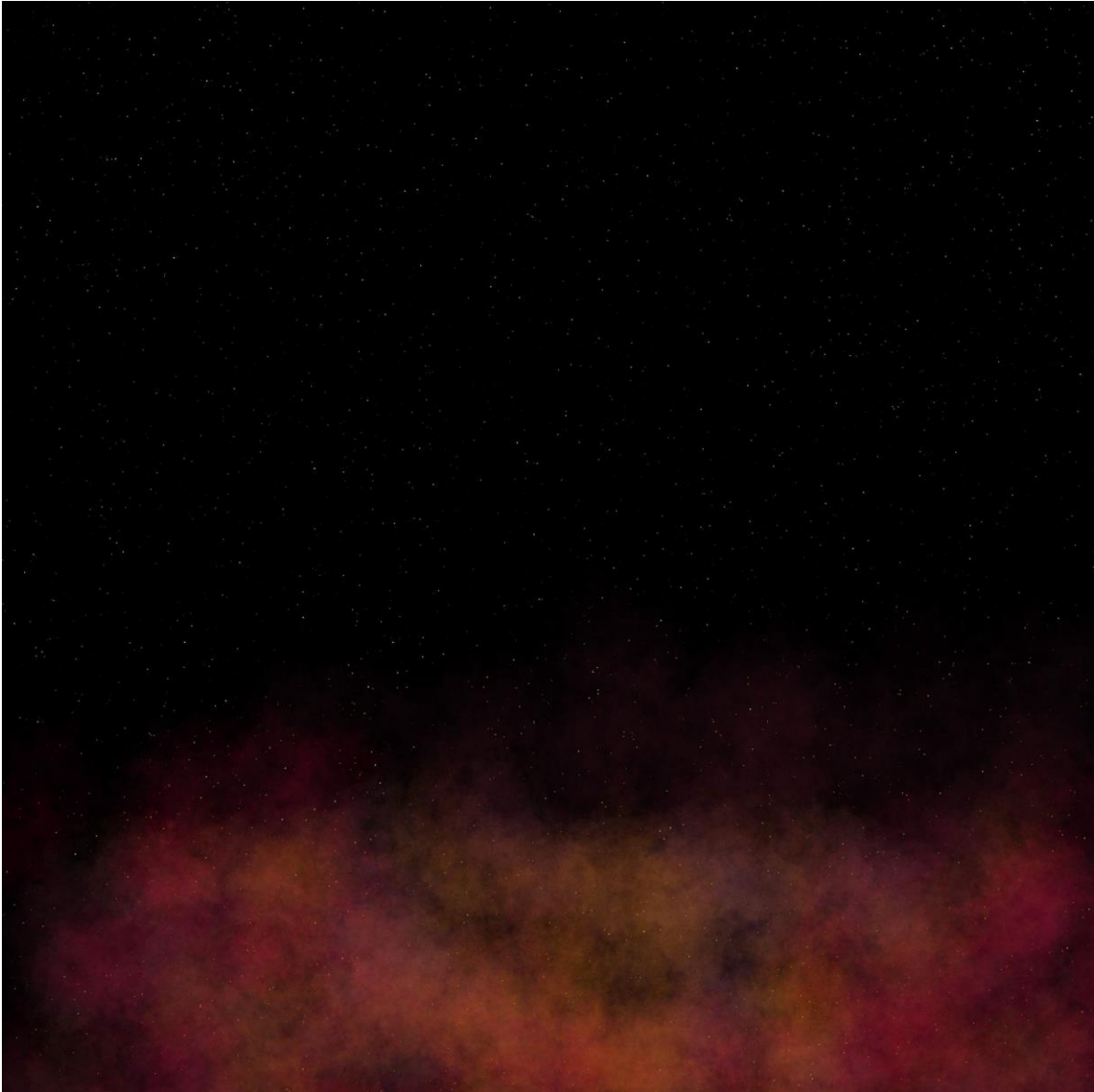
9 Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.

10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.

11 They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.

David stands out vividly in the Bible to me. He is far from perfect, yet God calls him a man after His own heart.

Just like David, we often feel alone but look to the tiger and remember that we are never truly alone.



Look to the Bat

Bats are one of God's craziest and creepiest creatures. They're the only mammals that can actually fly; the others just glide. They use echolocation to see in the dark. Some of them even drink blood but not human blood.

Bats are nocturnal.

For us, the dark is something we often fear.

But bats spend most of their lives in darkness.

Whether we like it or not, every Christian spends time in the dark.

Psalm 23:4

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Bats don't fear the dark, and neither should we.

Although God calls us into the dark; He always walks with us.

Bats also have excellent hearing which they can use to navigate through the dark.

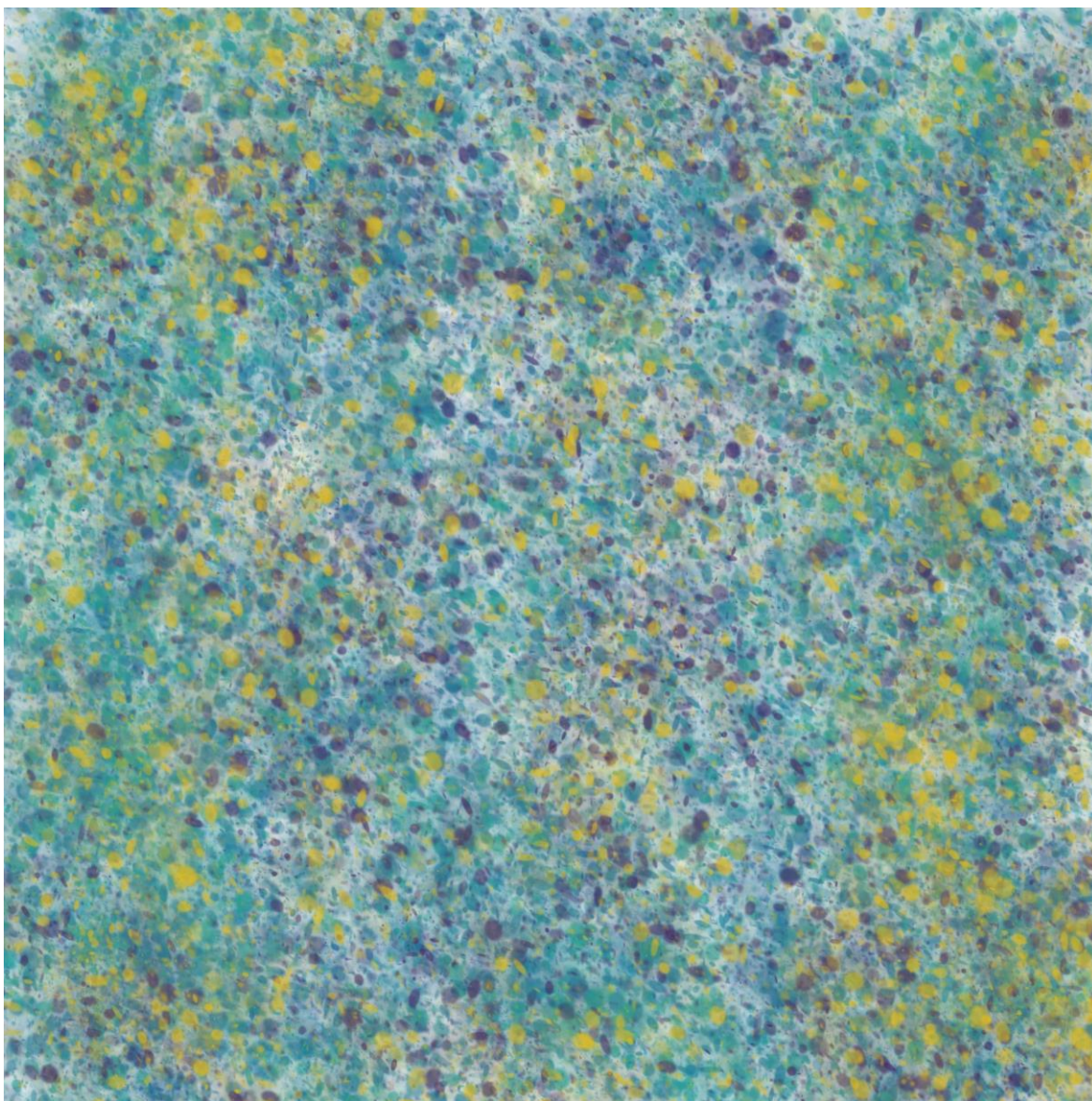
Proverbs 1:33

But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell in safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

When we can't see, we have to rely on our other senses.

God never lets us know what His plan is. Instead, He guides us step by step which requires faith—even blind faith.

When God calls us into the dark, we have to follow His voice trusting that wherever He is leading it's for our good.



Look to the Peacock

When God created the world, He knew that his creation needed companionship. All of the animals were in pairs. God said, “It is not good that man should be alone.” Peacocks just like humans have a significant need for companionship. Alone they become heartbroken.

If anyone understood loneliness, it was David.

In Psalm 25: 6 (KJV), he says, *Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.*

God literally created us for companionship and communion.

Most of us spend our entire lives trying to fill our significant need for fellowship with earthly things failing to realize that we really need our Creator's company.

Just like peacocks, God created us to be colorful and creative.

By giving us dominion over the earth that included language, math, science, art—God created us in His image to create! God is the ultimate Artist and the Author of the universe.

As reflections of this Creative Creator, we should embrace the gifts He gave us.

Ephesians 2:10 (KJV)

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Peacocks are beautiful animals, and just like all of God's creations, we can learn a thing or two from them.

I know circumstances are a little crazy right now, but look to the peacock.

If you're keeping to yourself right now, draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. If you're getting antsy from being cooped up, be creative like your Creator. And finally, remember that God is in control.

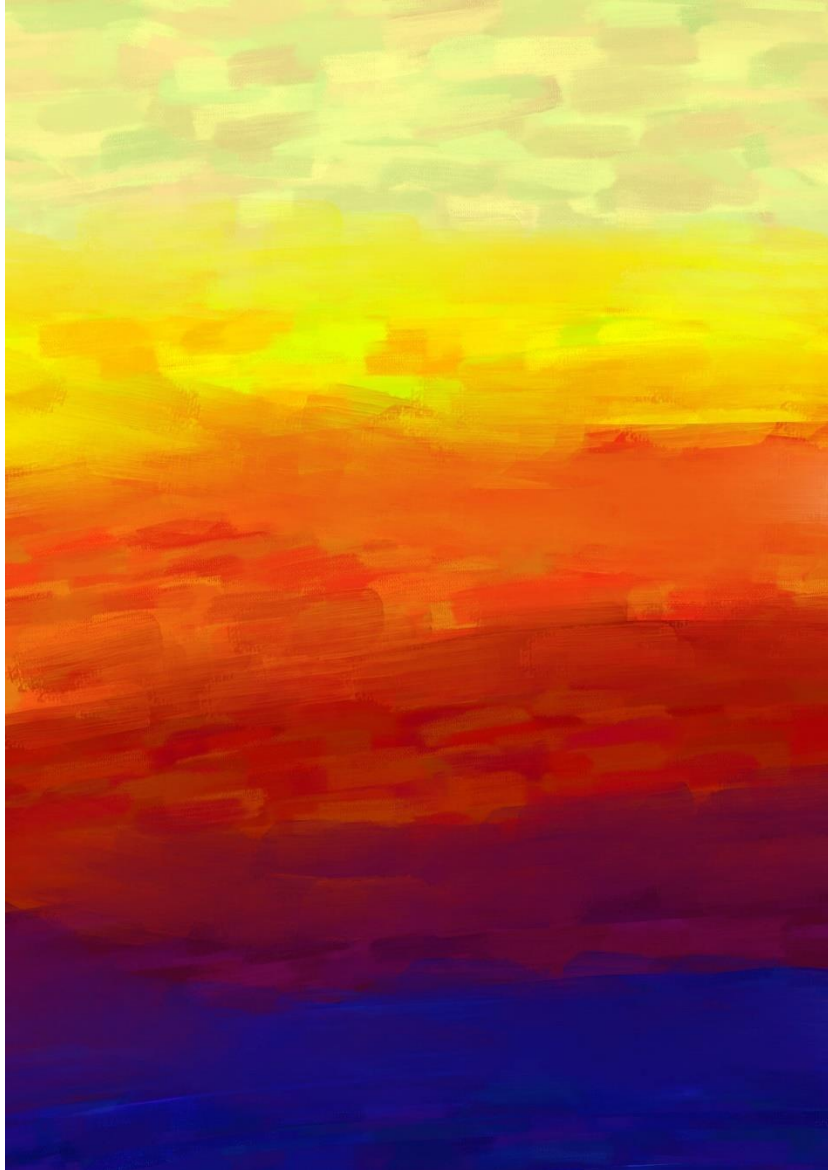


Holidays

This series focuses on Halloween, Christmas, New Years, and Valentine's Day. It was started October 2019 and finished February 2020.

The older I've gotten; the harder holidays have become. They used to be magical, but now they're bittersweet.

If you're like me, you need some extra encouragement during the holidays.



Waiting to Solve the Mystery

One of the hardest things about being an author at least for me is that I love being in control.

An author controls everything from the beginning to the ending of a story. This can honestly give the author a god-complex.

We know everything that our characters are going to face everything that our readers will read with bated breath.

It's hard to stop being an author. To separate fiction from reality. To realize that in the real world, I'm not the writer.

Rather, God is the author of the universe. So, that means the writer becomes the reader. Readers never know what the author's about to do; that's part of what makes a good book—the mystery.

Life is a mystery that we aren't in control of. Instead, we're kinda like Scooby and the gang just trying to solve the mystery. In mysteries, we're always waiting for what will happen next.

And isn't that just like life?

We want to grow up. We want to know exactly what God wants us to do. Where should we go to college? What major should we choose? Who's our future spouse? We're always waiting for the next clue.

God, however; knows that the perfect mystery isn't one that gives the ending away. (It's not the butler!) God makes us wait.

I don't know about you, but I can't count how many times a pastor has said, "Don't ever pray for patience. Cause then God will teach ya how to be patient."

But I think that whether we ask for it or not, God teaches us to be patient.

Isaiah 40:31

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew [their] strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; [and] they shall walk, and not faint.

If we don't wait on God, we grow weary from depending on ourselves. As much as I love writing fiction, I suck at writing life. Life's mystery is better left to the Author of the universe.

Psalms 37:7

Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

Whenever the Bible uses an understood you, it's a command. Here, God just straight up tells us to wait patiently for Him. He understands how hard waiting can be, but He's asking us to trust Him.

I loved Scooby Doo when I was little if I'm honest I still do! Though I usually watch crime shows now. But whether it's Edgar Allen Poe, Scooby Doo, or Criminal Minds—it's just a mystery.

The thing about mysteries is that you almost never know what's really going on until the ending. So, you have to wait to solve the mystery one clue at a time. God gives each of us an individual mystery that we will never fully understand.

Isaiah 55:8-9 (KJV)

*8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.
9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

We're God's meddling kids, and He loves to surprise us with what He has in store.



Something about the Night

“You are my sun, my moon, and all of my stars.” —E.E. Cummings

I grew up in the middle of nowhere where there’s nothing to distract from the night sky.
And there’s just something about the night—stars.

I'll admit I've always loved a starry sky, but I used to be afraid of the dark. In fact, I remember exactly when I became afraid of the dark. It was after watching a scary movie *at night*. Even before then, I slept with a nightlight, but not because I was afraid.

There's something about the night—something about the dark—something that needs a little light. Or rather giant fiery balls of gas called stars.

I think most of us are naturally afraid of what we can't see. This fear of the unknown is more than just the dark. We're afraid of not knowing what we should be; or where we should go. We're afraid of the future and not knowing what our lives will be like.

I think we spend most of our lives trying to illuminate what's in the dark which makes sense because God intended for us to light up the world:

Matthew 5:14-16 (KJV)

14 *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*

15 *Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

16 *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

One light on its own can't do much against the dark. But just like the night sky, there are countless stars lighting up the dark.

I grew up in Utah where Mormons outnumber Christians. It was easy to feel alone in my faith. When I went to Bible camp in the summer, I was always surprised at how many other Christians were actually in Utah.

Sure, we were miles apart, but suddenly, I didn't feel so alone.

Similarly, now I go to a Christian college with thousands of Christian students from all over the world.

There are countless stars, yet they're light years away from one another.

Thankfully, fellow believers are closer.

Remember that you are not alone when darkness falls.

Stars have guided men through the dark for centuries.

SONNET 116 BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Let me not to the marriage of true minds Admit impediments. Love is not love Which alters when it alteration finds, Or bends with the remover to remove.

O no! it is an ever-fixed mark That looks on tempests and is never shaken; It is the star to every wand'ring bark,

Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks Within his bending sickle's compass come; Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error and upon me prov'd, I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

Shakespeare has two symbols in this poem: the star and the ship.

These symbols represent two people in love.

The star is unmovable while the ship is being tossed by the sea.
While the ship is going through a dark storm, the star continues to shine.
I think this poem can easily fit into our walk with God.
He is our *ever-fixed mark*. He's unmovable.
We're like the *wand'ring bark*; a ship lost at sea.
God is shining like the stars to draw us back to Him.

Psalm 8:3-4 (KJV)

3 *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;*

4 *What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?*

Stars remind us of how little we are in this gigantic universe.
Staring at the stars is a humbling thing.
Something about the night reminds us of how insignificant we truly are.
And yet, God is mindful of us.



It Might Not Look Like Much...

One of my favorite Christmas traditions is a real Christmas tree.

If you've had any experience with a real Christmas tree you know that they're actually a lot more work than your average fake tree.

If you've never had one, let me explain.

For one, they're a lot harder to decorate because they're spiky. Fake trees might tickle you a little, but real trees will scratch you up!

Second, they're a little more delicate than you'd think.

You have to be careful about your ornaments because if they're too heavy the branches won't be able to hold them up.

Unlike a fake tree, real ones aren't made of metal and wire.

Third, you have to keep them alive. You could potentially keep a fake tree out for as long as you'd like, but real trees have had their life chopped short. You have to find a way to nurture the tree if you want it to last past Christmas this includes giving the tree water and sprite

What does this have to do with anything?

A teeny, tiny bit of faith can move mountains. But what about faith like a real Christmas tree? I know it sounds a bit odd, just hang with me for a minute. Sometimes, real Christmas trees don't look as nice as a fake one. But that doesn't change the fact that it's real.

A fake tree will always be fake.

I think the same goes for faith.

Sometimes, our faith might not look like much.

Sometimes, our faith is as tiny as a mustard seed. But if our faith is real?

IF OUR FAITH IS REAL, IT TAKES A LOT OF WORK.

Real faith is hard, and at times we come away battered. Usually, this is because of our own stubbornness. Take Jacob who wrestled against the Angel of the Lord, or Naomi who trusted circumstances over God, or even Jesus who was bruised for our transgressions.

REAL FAITH CAN ONLY TAKE SO MUCH.

Let's be honest, we're only human. We can only handle so much.

Human strength will always fail us. This is true even of the mightiest of us like David who waxed faint fighting a giant (not Goliath although he was a relation).

I think sometimes we forget our own limitations.

We burden ourselves with what everyone else things, with where we think we need to be in life, with all the things that don't really matter.

REAL FAITH HAS TO BE NURTURED.

Mustard seeds cannot grow into giant trees if they're not nurtured.

Real Christmas trees won't make it to Christmas if they aren't nurtured.

And real faith must be nurtured. That's part of what makes it real.

Our need for being nurtured is how we know we're alive.

Just how a real Christmas tree might not always look like much, neither did Jesus Christ when He first came into the world two thousand years ago.

So, this Christmas, I hope you remember that God uses those who might not look like much.

Isaiah 9:6 (KJV)

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.



Something New?

I've never understood the big deal with New Years' resolutions.

We make them, but do we ever truly keep them? I can't think of one that I've ever kept. Maybe, I'm just flaky. But I like to think that I stay the course. I'm stubborn to a fault, but I use that characteristic to stick to my decisions.

Rather than resolutions, the Bible has covenants. A promise that goes so much deeper. Usually, a covenant is a promise from God. Or between friends such as when David and Jonathan promised to keep their friendship.

There is something beautiful about covenants. Especially if you learn what exactly God has promised to you and me.

One of my favorite Bible teachers always advised to mark the promises in the Bible. An easy way to spot promises are the verbs will or shall.

Genesis 9:13 (KJV)

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

Here, God promises that He will never destroy the earth with a flood again.

When the rest of the world is freaking out thinking that the world is going to end in twelve years because the ice caps are melting, and the sea is rising; you can rest easy knowing that the world is in God's hands.

Deuteronomy 7:9 (KJV)

And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.

What a beautiful promise.

Resolutions are human, and just like humans they often disappoint. They're supposed to be a renewal. A new beginning. A new start. But they seldom are. Covenants, however; are often rooted in faith.

Covenants from God are unchangeable and unbreakable.

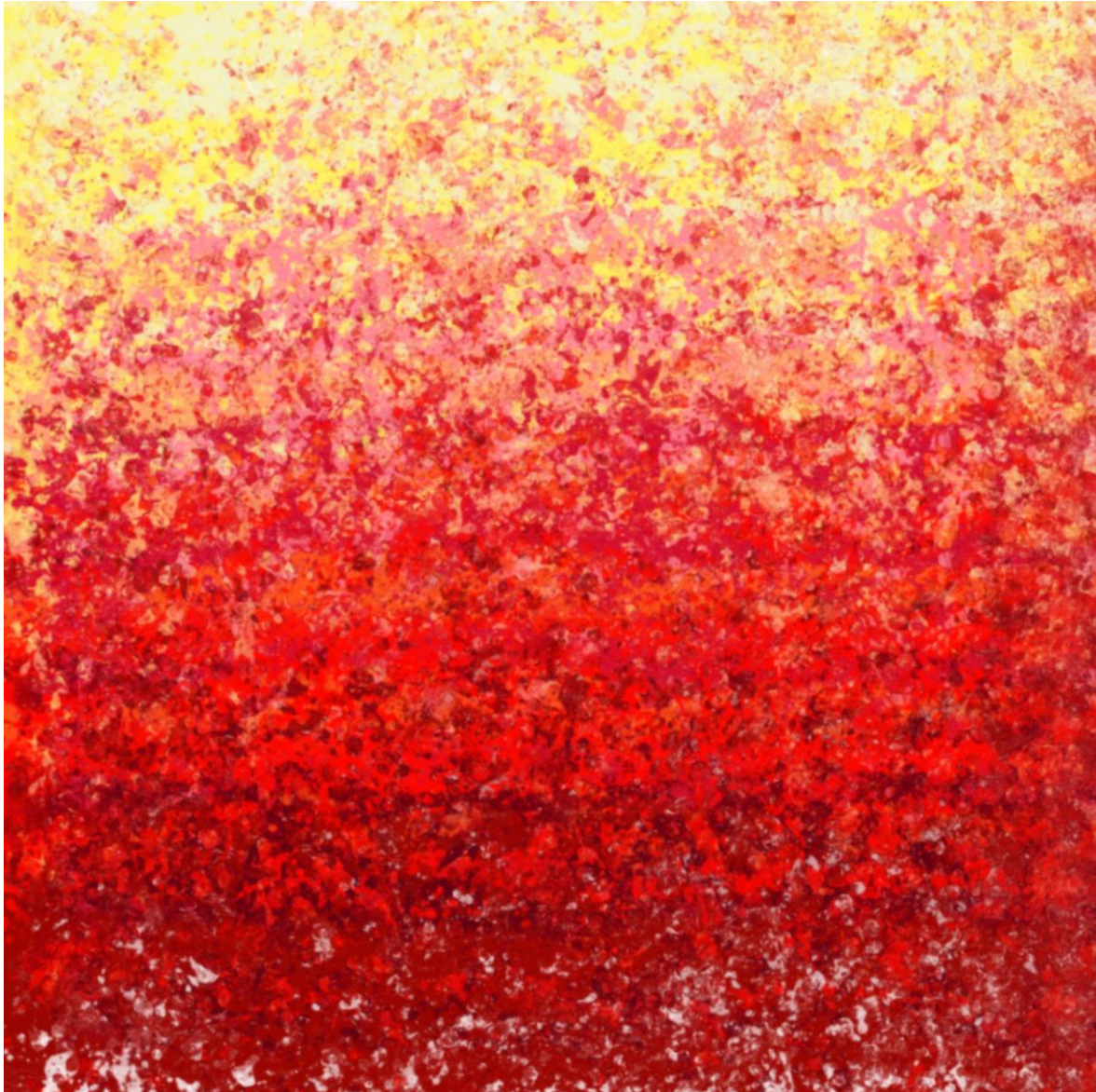
Which do you prefer?

I'm not saying that you shouldn't make a New Years' resolution.

If that's your thing, then go for it.

But what I am saying is that there is something more, something better.

If you're like me, sick of broken promises and resolutions; maybe it's time to make a covenant.



The One True Valentine's

Yesterday, I was a Valentine's party pooper. I avoided all the gooey romantic festivities. To a degree, Valentine's Day is an overrated holiday; it's corny and definitely an excuse to spend too much money on heart aesthetics.

My history teacher said that Americans spend \$27 billion on Valentine's Day.

The reason that I wasn't in a Valentine's Day mood yesterday is that I'm single as a pringle!

Shakespeare says it perfectly, "O, how bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes!"

I know it's negative thinking, and it's definitely a heart problem. I just finished my personal devotion, and an epiphany hit me. The truth is I do have a Valentine's, and He's so much more than that.

He's my Creator, the Lover of my soul, and my constant Wooer.

I don't know where you are with love right now.

Maybe, you're like me and a little bitter. Maybe you're married or have a significant other.

But wherever you are, I want to remind you of God's love.

In my personal devos, I've been reading a chapter of Hosea a day. Now I'm notoriously terrible at consistently doing my devos, and I'm also very busy this semester. So, I've been trying new methods for devos that can be done in one setting and very quickly. I found an online commentary on Hosea called Enduring Word Bible Commentary.

Hosea is not a very well known book of the Bible, but it is truly a gem.

This is my second time reading it, and I really recommend it. Hosea really brings the love of God to a whole new level.

Hosea 2:6 (KJV)

Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.

According to Enduring Word Commentary, "When God hedges our way with thorns, we usually don't like it. We sometimes think God is against us when the thorns hurt, and we can't find the wrong paths. But it is really one of the sweetest expressions of God's love to hedge up your way with thorns and to wall us in."

What a thought!

Whenever something hurts, we immediately think God is punishing us.

Last week, I was really struggling. My leg was in agony. I couldn't walk, or sit in class, or lie down without feeling constant pain. It hurt more than I thought I could handle, but the pain made me cleave to God in a way that I honestly haven't done in quite a while. I had to remember that He doesn't give us more than what we can bear. I had to remember that He was my strength and my healing.

Thorns hurt, but they draw us back to the One who can take away the pain.

Hosea 2: 7-8 (KJV)

7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.

8 For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.

Enduring Word says, "Even when Israel went after other gods, the Lord still provided for her. This showed His great, unselfish love to Israel. Even though Israel took what God provided and prepared it for Baal, He still loved them."

God told Hosea to marry a prostitute which would be a picture of God and Israel and our relationship with God.

Hosea's obedience took incredible faith because this marriage would be extremely difficult from the start.

Obviously, Hosea's love for Gomer doesn't compare to God's love for us, but it's a powerful picture. When we turn away from God, it's just like adultery. Just like Gomer, we repeatedly turn away; but just like Hosea, God's love for us is incredible.

Enduring Word Commentary explains,

When Hosea provided for Gomer, she spent it on her adulterous lovers. It's as if Hosea went to the house of Gomer's lover, where she lived apart from her husband and in adultery. He knew that this scoundrel of a man couldn't provide for Gomer, and that she lived in poverty and rags. Hosea knocked at the door. He spoke to the man who answered, "Are you the man living with Gomer?" The man wondered what business it was of Hosea's; then he revealed: 'I'm Hosea, her husband. I've brought these groceries and money so she can be provided for.' When Hosea left, Gomer and her lover must have thought he was a fool. What a great dinner they had together with the food Hosea brought! But this is how the LORD loves us, lavishing blessing on us even when we are worshiping idols, providing us with blessings we waste on other gods.

I don't know about you, but I can't count how many times God has blessed me when I absolutely don't deserve it.

Sometimes, we paint God as this angry punisher, when in reality God wants nothing more than to bless us. However, His desire to bless is overruled by His nature. Our sin will always have consequences! And sometimes, God will put a hedge of thorns around us not out of anger but out of love.

Hosea 2:14 (KJV)

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

When we sin—when we flee from God, we end up like the Prodigal son. Our circumstances become worse and worse. Sin's fleeting pleasure turns bitter. We are left bereft and grieved. Our souls and hearts broken.

Charles Spurgeon writes, "This is a singular kind of power: 'I will allure her;' not, 'I will drive her' not even, 'I will draw her,' or, 'I will drag her;' or, 'I will force her.' No, 'I will allure her.' It is a very remarkable word, and it teaches us that the allurements of love surpasses in power all other forces. That is how the devil ruins us; he tempts us with honeyed words, sweet utterances, with the baits of pleasure and the like; and the Lord in mercy determines that, in all truthfulness, he will outbid the devil, and he will win us to himself by fascinations, enticements, and allurements which shall be stronger than any force of resistance we may offer. This is a wonderfully precious word: 'I will allure her.'"

God is always wooing us. He courts us. He thinks of us so much that His thoughts are greater than all of the kernels of sand on every beach He created. He is absolutely in love with us! Why would we ever choose anything else over Him?

Hosea 2:23 (KJV)

And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

Enduring Word says, “Think about it: Which one of the pagan gods of the nations ever wanted the love of their followers? Which of them ever asked, “Do you love me?”

False gods don’t want our love, they want our fear, our obedience, our slave-like sacrifice and devotion.

But the true God, the living God, isn’t satisfied with just our fear, our obedience, or even with our slave-like sacrifice and devotion. He wants our love, freely given and enjoyed in relationship with Him.

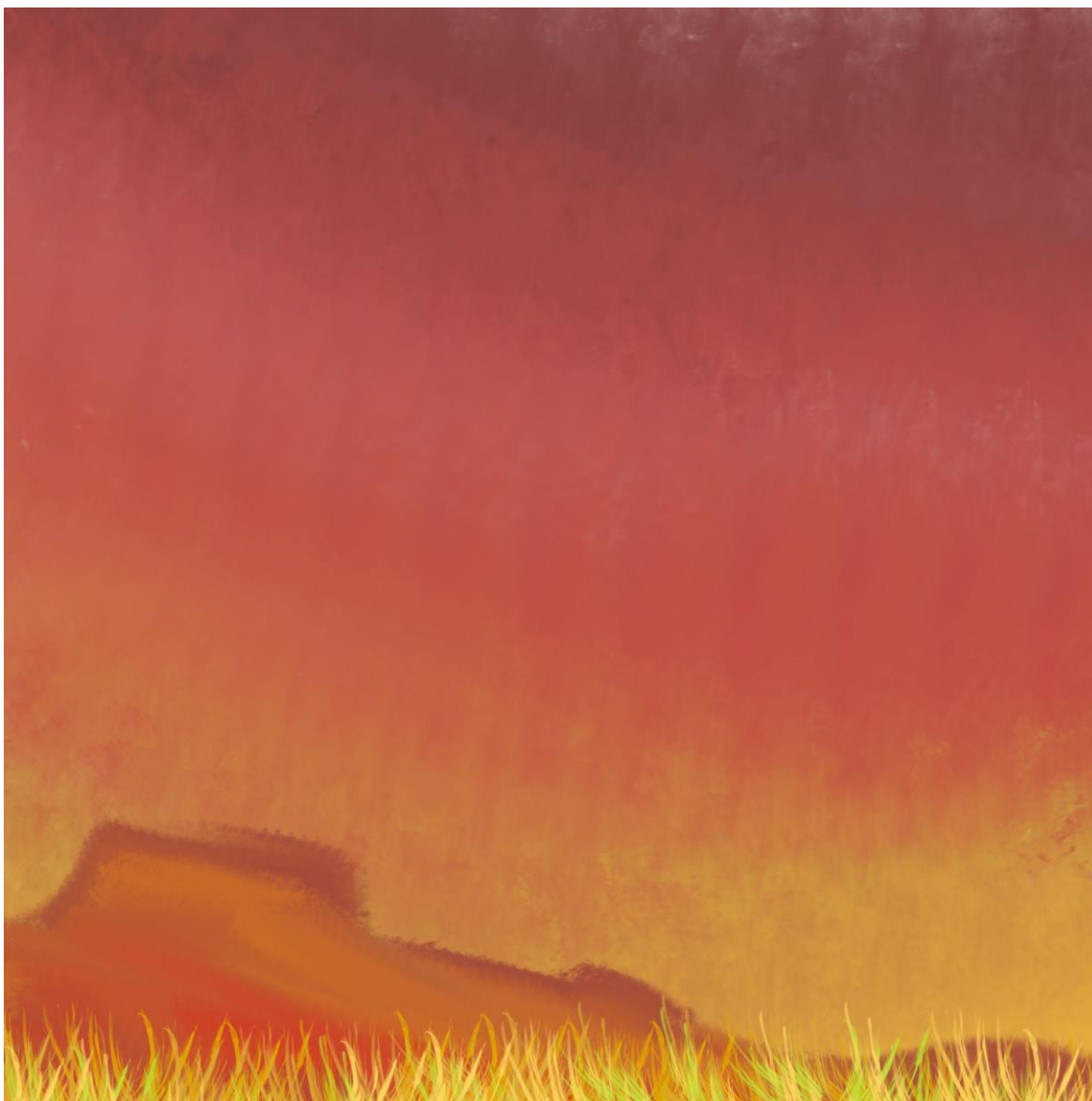
If we miss this, we miss the heart of God’s work in us and for us.

For Christians, every day should be Valentine's Day because our God loves us more every day.

His love is more than a husband's, or a boyfriend's, or a girlfriend's, or a friend's.

Yes, those loves are sweet, but ultimately, they fall short compared to God’s unending love.

I hope you guys enjoyed this post. It was just what I needed, and I hope you got something out of it.



God' s Grace in David' s Life

This series is one of my favorites!

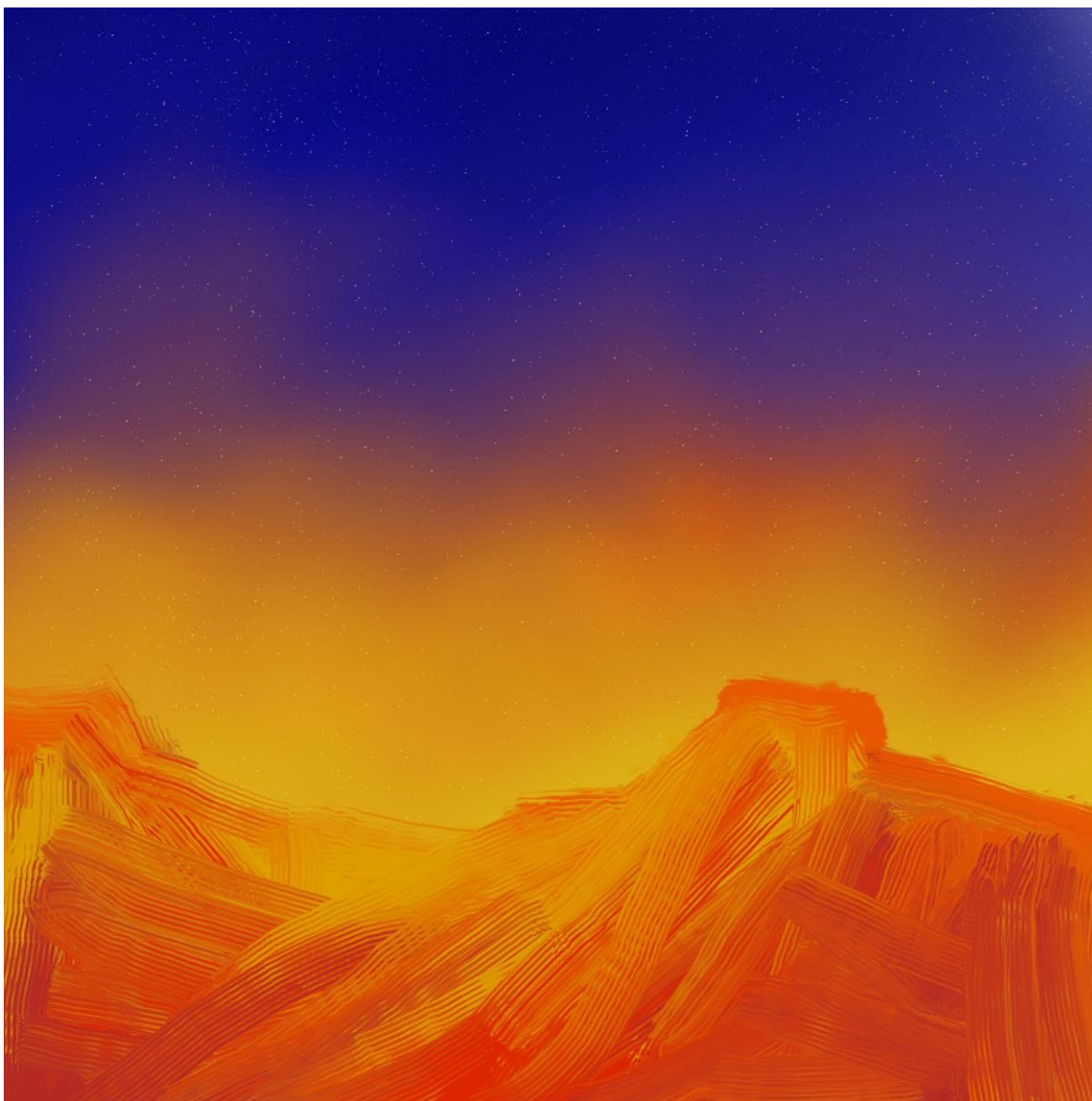
David is my favorite figure in the Bible.

I find so much encouragement in his life and his Psalms.

This was originally a paper that I wrote for class that I turned into a three-part devotional.

I started this in November 2019 and finished in July 2020.

Try writing your own devotion on your favorite person in the Bible. You might be surprised.



God' s Grace in David' s Life: Lowliness

So, this will begin a series looking at God's grace throughout David's life specifically in five areas: lowliness, neediness, ignorance, worthlessness, and weakness. David has always been one of my favorite Bible characters. What I love most about David is how human he is. He made some of the most infamous mistakes in the Bible, and yet we know him as a man after God's own heart. That's super encouraging! Because David was just like you and me: he was a sinner, he was insignificant, and he was lowly.

To do a study on grace, we have to understand what grace means. The best definition I've ever found is that **GRACE IS UNMERITED FAVOR.**

First, we're looking at God's grace in David's life through lowliness. For this series, I encourage you to do some Bible reading alongside with it. This devotion covers 1 Samuel 16:6-13.

I don't know about you, but God's grace through lowliness almost seems like an oxymoron. It isn't what we would automatically assume.

In 2 Samuel 7:8, God reminds David of his lowliness: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel."

In Judean culture, David, the youngest son, would not have amounted to much because he wouldn't have inherited. When he first enters the scene, he's a lowly shepherd doing menial jobs for his father. He's so insignificant that Jesse doesn't even think to call him until Samuel commands him to.

God shows His grace by choosing such a lowly vessel. God could have understandably chosen one of David's older brothers who even Samuel thought were surely the best options. However, God often chooses to work outside of the world's best. Instead, He showed grace to a lowly shepherd boy.

1 Samuel 16:7(KJV)

But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

Our own lowliness is something that we need to be aware of.

Psalms 8:4-6 KJV)

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

Just like David, we should be overwhelmed by God's grace. We're little more than dust. We're sinners who deserve the ultimate punishment.

Have you ever tried to go a day without sinning? To not lose your temper, to not covet, to not think something that you shouldn't, to not tell a little white lie. You get my point. It doesn't matter how good you are. At one point, you've sinned. And you've probably sinned more than once. It doesn't matter how tiny or insignificant your sin seemed to be. Because at the end of the day sin is sin. God sees sin exactly the same. Nothing is bigger or worse than the other. It's just sin. And it doesn't matter how much or how little because all sin separates you from God. All sin deserves death.

And that's why God's grace is so overwhelming because we absolutely don't deserve it.

I KNOW THAT GOD CAN USE ME DESPITE MY FAULTS BECAUSE OF HIS UNMERITED FAVOR.



God' s Grace in David' s Life: Neediness

This is part two in the series about God's grace in David's life. The last post covered the area of lowliness. If you've missed that post, I encourage that you read it before this one.

As this is a month of favorites, David is my favorite person in the Bible. I especially love the Psalms.

Our reading for this post is 1 Samuel 21:10-15; 22:1-2.

THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE, DAVID EXPERIENCED GOD' S GRACE GOD SHOWS US HIS GRACE WHEN WE NEED IT THE MOST.

At the end of Samuel 21, David makes a serious blunder by fleeing to Gath. He let fear control his actions and failed to consult God. This lack of faith resulted in being surrounded by his enemies and putting on a humiliating show to escape.

Psalm 56 describes David's fear, sorrow, and discouragement in this time of his life.

Psalm 56 (KJV)

1 Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me.

2 Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High.

3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

4 In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

5 Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil.

6 They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.

7 Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God.

8 Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?

9 When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me.

10 In God will I praise his word: in the Lord will I praise his word.

11 In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

12 Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee.

13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

I love verse 8.

It's one of my favorite Bible verses. It's a promise that God is with you and me through everything.

For the past three years, I've been studying professional writing at college. For most of the year I'm far from home fighting to get Bs and Cs. This time in my life is truly a time of wandering.

In the beginning of 1 Samuel 22, David escapes to Adullam.

Adullam means hiding place or a retreat or a refuge which is very fitting because that is what God provided. Adullam would become David's first base while he was on the run from Saul.

1 Samuel 22:1-2(KJV)

1 David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him.

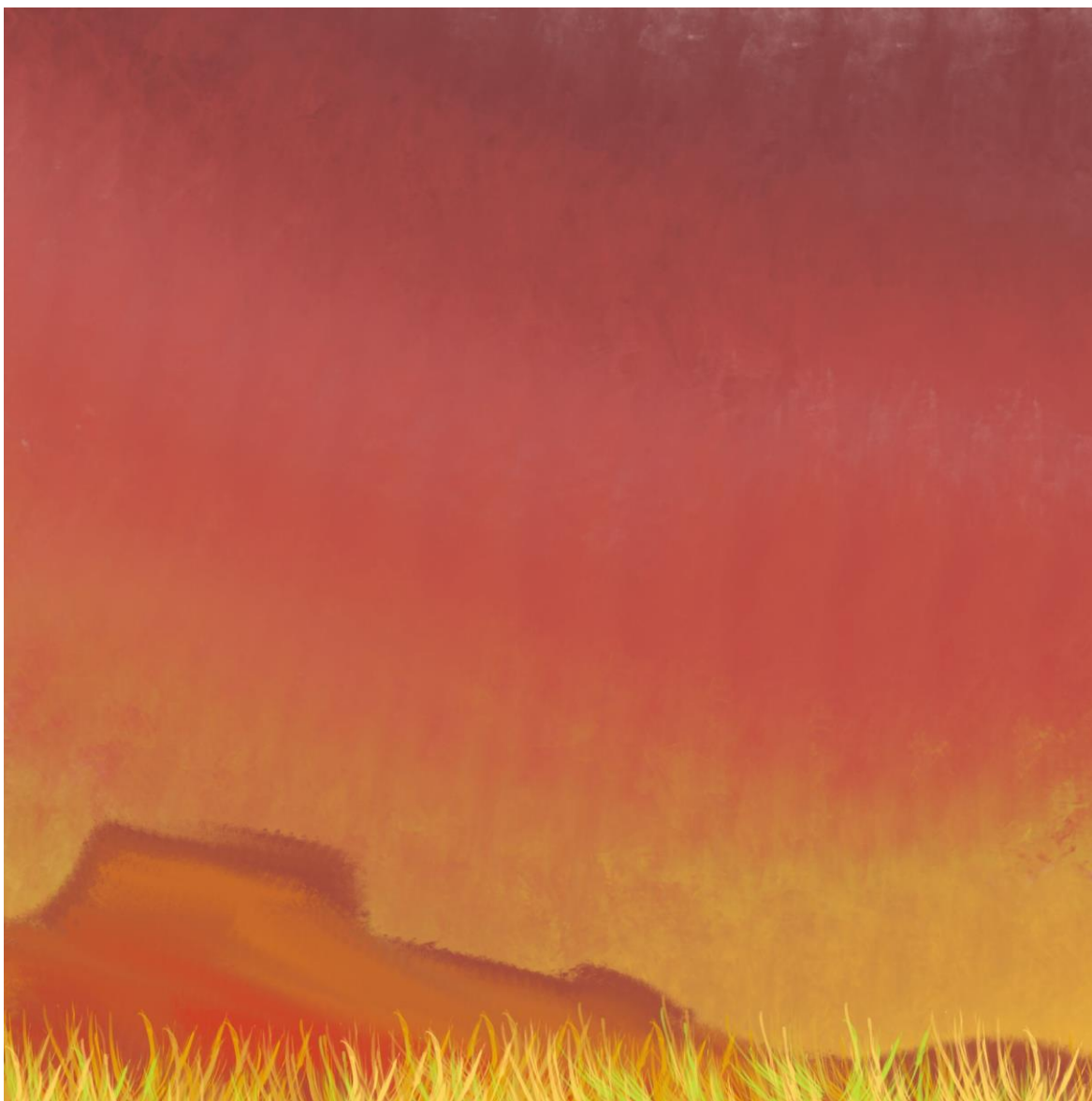
2 And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.

David was very much distressed, in debt (he was living on the run probably low on funds,) and discontented just like those who would become his mighty men.

Despite David's mistake, God gave David much needed grace. God sent David support through family, friends, and like-minded men.

Sometimes, we make the mistake of trying to pretend that we're fine that we don't need anyone or anything, but the truth is we have all had a time of neediness. A time when we needed help desperately, a time when God's grace overflows.

EVEN WHEN I DON' T DESERVE GOD' S GRACE, HE GIVES ME IT WHEN I NEED IT THE MOST.



God' s Grace in David' s Life: Ignorance

Sorry, this has taken so long!

This is part three of my series on David. The last two posts covered the topics of lowliness and neediness. If you've missed those, I encourage you to read them before this one. As you probably know David is my favorite character in the Bible. I absolutely love the Psalms, and I love how someone so painfully human like David can play such a huge part in God's plan.

The reading for this post is: 2 Samuel 3:1-7 and 2 Samuel 6:1-9.

THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE, DAVID EXPERIENCED GOD' S GRACE GOD SHOWS US HIS GRACE DESPITE OUR IGNORANCE.

Ignorance is part of being human. Unlike God, we are not omniscient. We will never know everything. David like us did not know everything.

Two examples of David's ignorance are: his ignorance about what the Bible says about marriage and his ignorance with moving the Ark. The Bible is very clear and specific about these two areas, yet David was either directly defying God's word or likely just ignorant.

First, marriage was always intended to be between one man and one wife. Every time polygamy is in the Bible the consequences are so obvious that the Bible doesn't even need to clearly say that it is wrong. Look at David's own marriages. David's ignorance in this part of his life affected his children. Ignorance causes pain.

Second, the Ark. Anyone who's tried to read the law knows that there are tons of laws. Very specific laws. It's understandable that David couldn't remember them all. But ignorance always causes pain.

David's ignorance always negatively affected innocents.

However, God never hides his will. David could have easily consulted God or the Word of God to learn how God wanted him to act in these two areas. Because of his ignorance, David faced very real consequences but, God's grace still overflowed. David learned from his ignorance and corrected his mistakes. God still chose to use him despite his ignorance.

God doesn't want us to be ignorant. He wants us to know Him.

My favorite book in the Bible is Hosea. If you haven't taken the time to read it or study it, I highly recommend it. In Hosea, God deals with ignorance repeatedly. Whenever something is repeated in the Bible, it's important.

Here are some verses when God repeats how important it is to know and be known.

Hosea 4:6 (KJV)

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

This verse shows us how seriously God takes ignorance.

Hosea 6:3 (KJV)

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

God is always constant. He is, was, and will always be the same. But if we don't know Him, how can we trust in this promise?

Hosea 6:6 (KJV)

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

Again, this shows us how much God desires us to know Him. In the Old Testament, God used repeated sacrifices to point towards Jesus Christ.

The sacrifices, the law, the priests were all there to show us that no matter what we did we could never save ourselves.

Only the High Priest could go into the Holy of Holies.

But when Jesus died, anyone could come to Him. We no longer have to go through a priest. We no longer have to sacrifice. All we have to do is get to know Him and build a relationship with Him. You can't have a relationship with someone without getting to know them.

Hosea 8:2 (KJV)

Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee.

Do you know Him? Hosea 13:4 Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.

This is so important! God repeats this throughout the Bible. God wants us to know Him because no one else can save us.

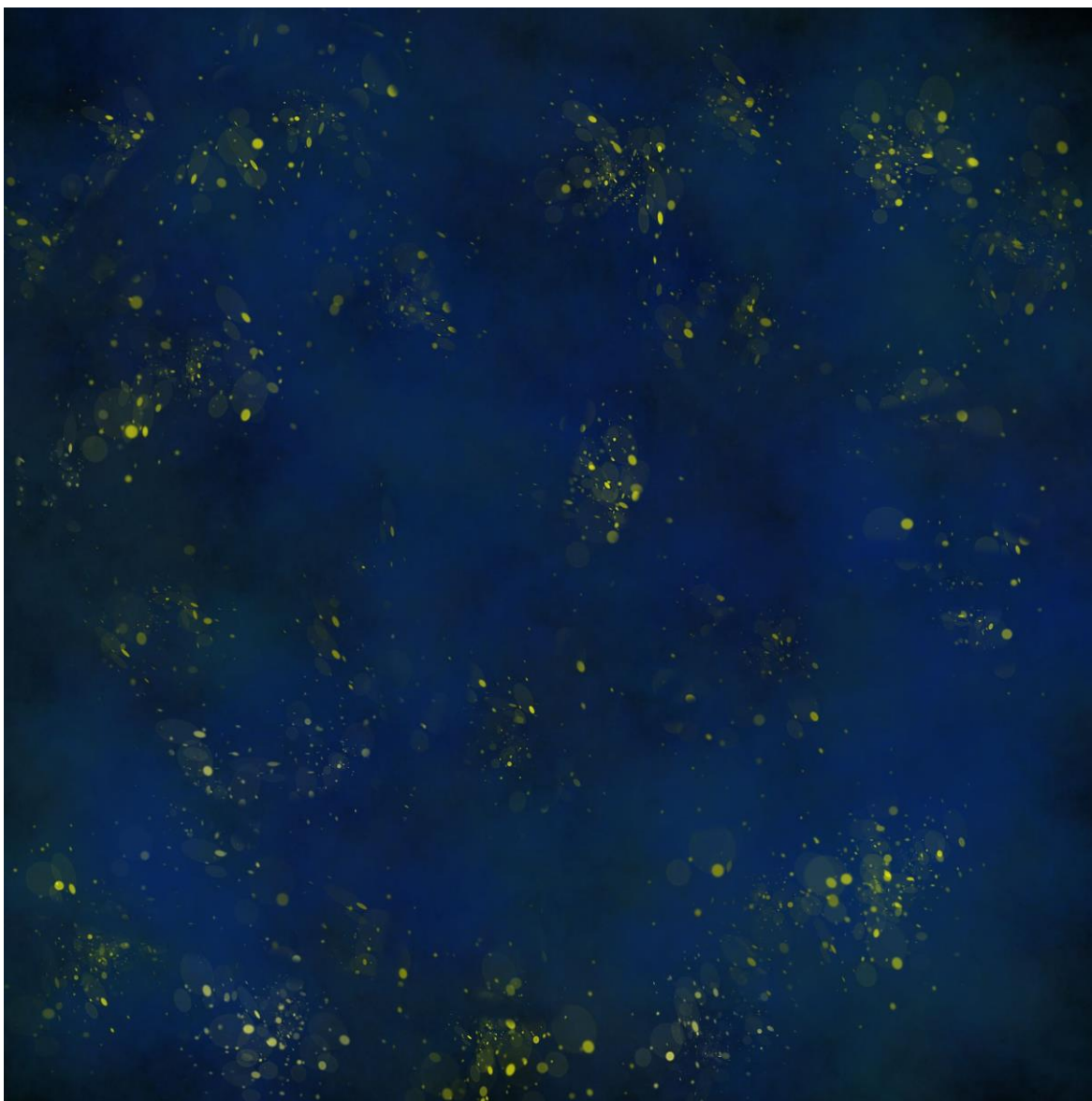
Hosea 13:5

I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

God knows us in the darkest parts of our lives. He knows our pain, our hurt, and our suffering. He knows everything about us: the good and the bad. We can't keep anything from Him. And we shouldn't want to. No one knows us like God just like no one loves us like He does.

Today, all anyone wants to do is forget and cling to ignorance. But this goes directly against God's word. Tearing down statues, erasing history, and clinging to ignorance will only cause pain.

WHEN I AM IGNORANT, I SHOULD LOOK TO GOD FOR ANSWERS, AND I CAN TRUST THAT HIS GRACE EXTENDS TO MY IGNORANCE.



Hope?

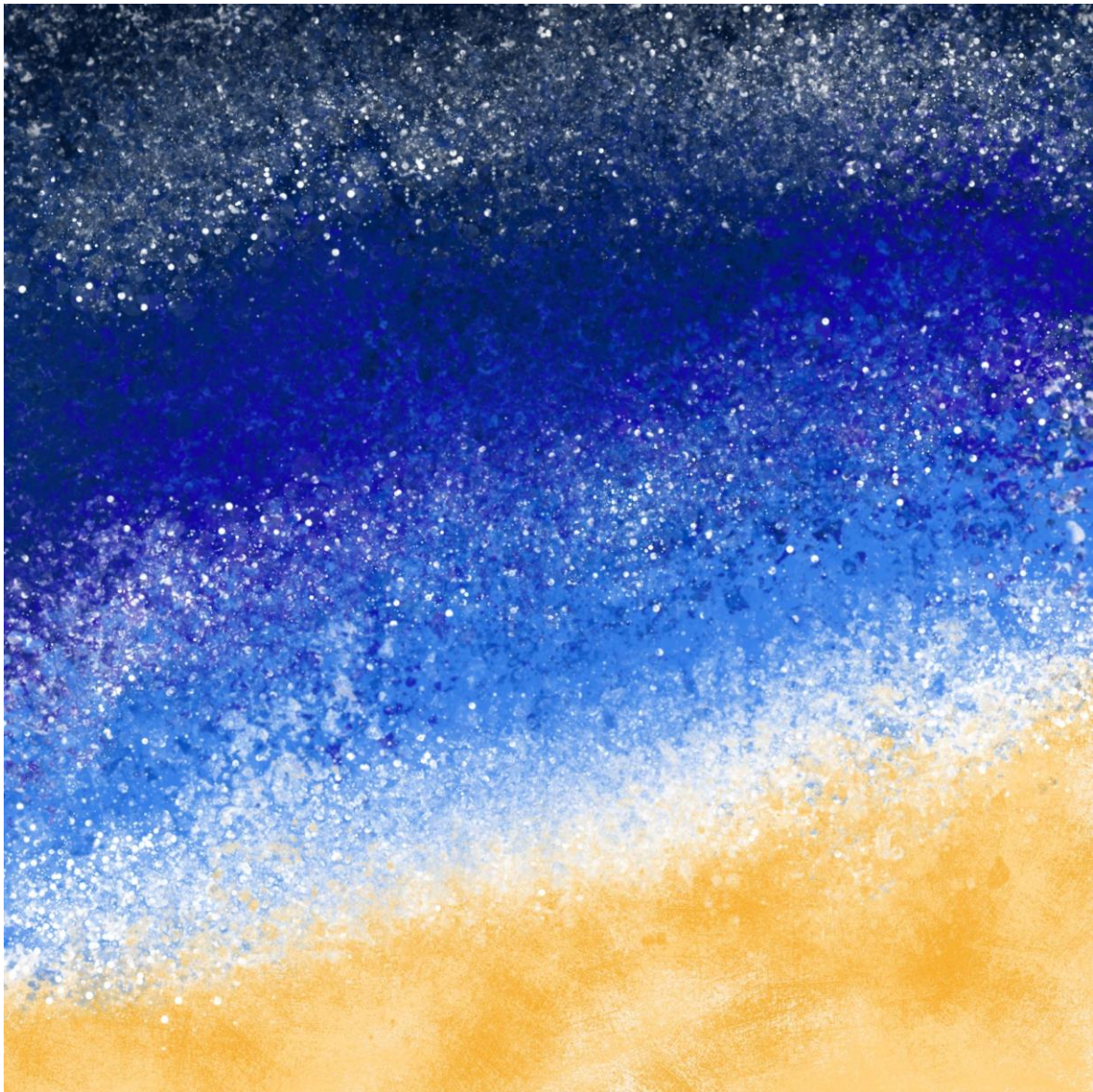
This series was written during September 2020.

We've all struggled with 2020.

But I'll be honest, this has been one of the worst years that I've experienced. A lot of things were happening all at once. And not just what was on the news.

It literally felt like I was being attacked from every angle from personal problems, to social problems, to spiritual problems, and mental problems.

This year has tested my faith more than any year before, and if I'm honest, I'm still struggling to find hope.



Dreadful Steps

We all have to take steps in life whether we want to or not.

The road less traveled by.

The narrow path.

It's often steep and difficult, but no one travels through life without it.

I think we all wish that there was another way, but there isn't. I have dreadful steps before me. And I wish more than anything that I could turn back or never take these steps in the first place.

But God calls us to dreadful steps. Not to hurt us, not to scare us, but to force us to walk with Him. We can't get through dreadful steps without Him.

Lately, God has given me a plethora of dreadful steps.

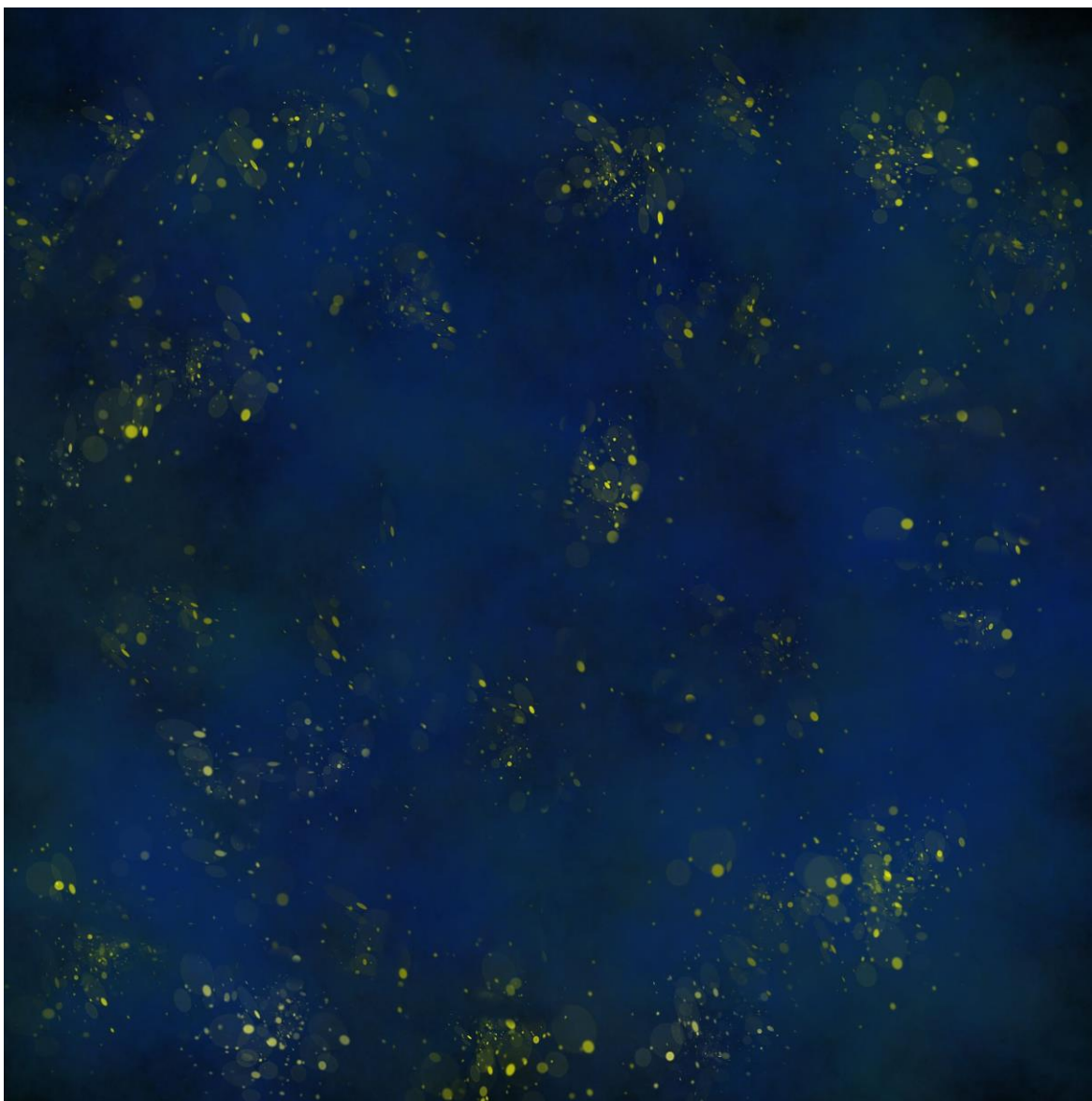
It's like having to go up too many steps. It's uncomfortable; it hurts; and it feels like you're going nowhere.

So, why do we have to go up these dreadful steps?

Well, to be honest, I'm not sure yet. But I think it's because there's something at the top. I don't know what yet, but whatever it is it must be worth it.

God wouldn't ask us to take these steps if it weren't worth it.

What steps is He asking you to climb?



Looking Up at Life

When we're little, we spend a lot of time looking up. We look up to our parents, to Santa Clause, to princesses, and superheroes. But when we grow up, we start looking down.

It's stupid to believe in Santa Clause, or that Anastasia didn't die, or that people have superpowers and can fly around in capes.

That's not necessarily wrong.

Even the Bible tells us to put away childish things. But the Bible also tells us to have child-like faith.

Children will believe in almost anything. It's ridiculous, funny, silly, but also beautiful. If you're like me, you're naturally a cynic, and you have a hard time believing anything.

But lately, I've been forced to look up.

Half the time, I'm asking why. The other half, I'm miserable because my neck hurts. If I were outside, I could be staring at the stars—but there aren't any stars in a city. So, I'm stuck looking up at a white dorm ceiling.

I've learned a few things mostly that sleeping on the floor sucks, and I wish I had a bed, and I wish that I hadn't gone to college this semester.

Have you ever had a period in your life where literally everything seems to be going wrong?

That's exactly where I'm at. And I'm stuck. I literally cannot do anything about it.

So, why am I here? What is God trying to teach me? I have no idea.

And if you're in the same boat, I'm sorry that I can't give you hope.

But I've been thinking of what it is to look up. Looking up as a child, looking up to God, looking up to the stars—

For most of our history, mankind has looked up and wondered why.

I think it's innate because everyone has looked up at one point in their lives rather as a child or a questioner.

When we're little, we also used to look up and question.

But our questions were usually of little meaning. Now, we look up with big questions, with serious problems, and with real pain.

I'm not the kind of Christian who can say that God talks to me. It's never worked like that for me.

He shows Himself to me in little ways like a still, small voice.

We just need to pause and listen.



About the Author

KYLEE KOSOFF is known primarily for her young-adult novel *Not Your Average Princess*.

She graduated from Pensacola Christian College with a B.A. in professional writing and minors in history and Bible. Her portfolio *A Writer's Wilderness* showcases her writing skills, creativity, and faith.

Her articles have been published with Myra Leana and Lightfolio.

Kylee loves history, westerns, books, and of course dragons—hence why she identifies as a huge geek.

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